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PASSION AND PRINCIPLE.

A NOVEL.

EDITED BY

CAPT. FREDERICK CHAMIER, R.N.

“ Our acts our angels are, or good or ill
The fatal shadows that pursue us still.”

JOHN FLETCHER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PASSION AND PRINCIPLE.

CHAPTER I.

The lady thus addressed her spouse:—
What a mere dungeon is this house!
By no means large enough. And was it?
Yet this dark room, and that dark closet,
Those hangings with their worn out graces,
Long beards, long noses, and pale faces,
Are such an antiquated scene,
They overwhelm me with the spleen.

COWPER.

On a bright sunny day, towards the end of April, 18—, the quiet fishing-hamlet of Ethelwode presented an unusual appearance of festivity. The bells of the little church, whose low, grey Saxon tower was scarcely distinguishable from the rocks behind it, were ringing a merry peal; the whole population in holiday clothes were abroad in the street, and busy knots of fathers were scattered here and there, whilst the children, with their hands and aprons full of flowers, were eagerly running to and fro between the cottage gardens and the corner of the street

which turned into the London road. Lord Ethelwode, the owner of the fine old castle on the brow of the hill, was expected that day, on his return from abroad, and with him he was to bring a young, and, as report said, a beautiful bride. His tenants had all turned out to greet him, and the young men had already thrown off their coats, in readiness to unharness the horses and draw the noble pair in triumph to their ancestral home.

They had already been expected several hours; and, as all the flowers which the neighbourhood could furnish were gathered, and ready to be strewn on their road by the children, and as only two people could be employed in ringing the bells, and nothing remained to be done, the people grew tired of standing in the sun, looking towards the turning of the road, and gathered together in groups, to talk over their expected lord and lady.

“Well, this is a more joyful day than I thought my old eyes would ever see again at Ethelwode,” said Mr. Sibley, who had been bailiff of the estate for forty years, and who, on this extraordinary occasion, condescended to relax from his usual dignified reserve, and join one of the groups of gossips, which was composed of the aristocracy of the village. “When the present lord went away, just after the old lord’s death, I

thought, and so did many others, that he would never come to live here again."

"And how should he," said Mrs. Anderson, the porter's wife, "when the old lord gambled away every farthing, and sold all the land that wasn't entailed, and there was not enough left for the young lord to keep up the castle? Some people said he would sell it; but he was too proud to do that; and no wonder, when one thinks it's belonged to the family since the days of the old Saxon, Earl Cedric."

"I was at the castle the day the will was opened, and all came out about the debts," said Sibley. "My lord had been abroad for several years, and did not know what had been going on at home and all his father's shameful doings, so that the news of his ruin came upon him all of a heap. I shall never forget his look as he came out of the room where the executors had met, and crossed the hall. If ever man did look as if he would like to commit murder on himself or somebody else, such was he at that minute."

"Lord, Mr. Sibley, how you do talk!" said Mrs. Anderson, looking fearfully towards the turning of the road.

"Well, Mrs. Anderson, I only wish you had seen him, that's all. I went up to ask him about some repairs that were wanting to Cedric's tower, and he said: 'Curse the tower; let it fall!'

—only think of that ! he cursing that tower which he was always as fond of as the apple of his eye.”

“ But how does it happen ? ” asked another of the gossips, “ that he is coming back now, only a year after he went away a ruined man, as rich as a Jew, and with a wife into the bargain ? He must have spent more money than his father left him altogether, in repairing and refurnishing the castle as he has done.”

“ Why, he has married a rich widow, with as long a purse as he has a pedigree, and very handsome besides, as I hear. They have been staying abroad whilst the castle was being repaired with her money, and now they are coming to live in it. Long life to them, I say.”

All joined loudly in the wish, for, though the haughty, imperious baron had never been very popular among them, every one agreed that it would be an excellent thing for the village that a wealthy family should be settled again at the castle.

All further gossiping was put an end to by the shout which now arose from the watchers at the corner. “ They are coming, they are coming ! Here they are ! ” and the next moment a barouche and four, containing a lady and gentleman, dashed round the corner, into the little village street. Hats were tossed in the air, and hurras, loud and long, succeeded one another, as Lord Ethelwode

gave orders to the postillions to slacken their pace, and bowed and shook hands with one or two amongst the foremost groups. The beautiful woman who sat beside him bowed and smiled too, though somewhat languidly, at the loud cry of "God bless your ladyship! Welcome to Ethelwode!" The horses were quickly unharnessed, and the carriage dragged in triumph up the steep hill to the castle gate, over the heaps of flowers that the children strewed before it.

Another carriage followed that of Lord and Lady Ethelwode; and the few whose eyes and attention were not entirely engrossed by the former, were curious to know who was the lovely child who occupied it, with two female attendants, and who, frightened at the loud cheers, hid her face in the lap of the woman who sat next her. After all the party had entered the castle, it was ascertained that this was the only child of Lady Ethelwode, by her first marriage, which was the only additional piece of news that could be learnt this evening concerning the noble family; for Lady Ethelwode was too tired to reappear on the terrace, beneath which half the village had collected to offer their welcome, and Lord Ethelwode, having spoken a few words of courteous thanks to the crowd, and ordered that refreshments should be liberally dispensed amongst them, retreated also within the castle.

There was nothing more for the people to do but to drink their new Lord and Lady's health, with three times three, in the baron's stout ale, and return to the village to discuss at home, or at the public-house, every word and gesture of the noble pair, and conjecture from thence what sort of master and mistress they were likely to prove.

Their conjectures would probably have been much facilitated, could they have followed the subjects of them into the stately saloon where Lady Ethelwode had been led by her husband on leaving the carriage. She had thrown herself listlessly on one of the rich damask sofas, near the spacious fireplace, where a fire was burning brightly, although the weather was warm for the season ; and Lord Ethelwode stood near the open window, looking out on the beautiful prospect of wood and water, on which the setting sun was shedding a deep glow : but he looked as though he saw it not, and a frown of displeasure was on his brow.

"Are you cold, Helen," said he, turning to his wife, "that you sit by the fire, with your back turned to this lovely view?"

"Yes, I am very cold and very tired," replied Lady Ethelwode, in a sweet but rather drawling voice. "The people were so long dragging us up the hill that I am quite chilled. Is the view *very* beautiful?"

"It is the same I have so often described to you, and which you used to say you were so anxious to see."

"Well, so I am still," said the lady, rising languidly and walking to the window. "Yes, it is very beautiful, certainly; but, really, after a long journey, one is too tired to care for any thing but rest and quiet."

The frown darkened on Lord Ethelwode's countenance, as she returned to the sofa, but her back was turned to him, and she did not see it.

"This room looks so dark and gloomy in the twilight," she continued, as she drew nearer to the fire. "Do ring the bell for lights and tea, Ethelwode; I am half afraid to sit here in the dark, with those grim figures looking out of the tapestry."

Lord Ethelwode strode across the room and rang the bell so violently that the bell-pull remained in his hand. He threw it from him with a muttered oath: his wife shrank affectedly at the sound.

"Pray take care of what you are about. The old house will be falling about our ears; you should be more gentle, Ethelwode, really; it is quite dangerous."

"There is not much cause for alarm," replied her husband, in a tone of suppressed indignation; "the old house, as you are pleased to call the

castle, which has resisted time and change for eleven centuries, is not likely to be brought down by a bell-rope. Bring lights and tea directly," he added, to the footman, who had hastily answered the loud peal of the bell.

"And tell Mary to bring Miss Perceval to me," said Lady Ethelwode. "Poor Ellen! she must feel very strange in this rambling, gloomy place. By the way, I hope her nursery is not hung with this frightful tapestry. The child will go into fits if she sees these figures at night."

"I really do not know where Miss Percival's apartments are," answered Lord Ethelwode; "I suppose the housekeeper has settled that important matter; to-morrow you can see them, and alter them as you like, if they do not suit your taste."

"Yes; and, indeed, a little alteration will not be amiss every where. This old furniture is so heavy and sombre! a few *fauteuils*, and French tables, and other modern comforts, will be a great improvement. I must think about it to-morrow, and write to Gallow to send us some one to arrange it all."

"Lady Ethelwode, I beg you will think of no such thing. Your own *private* apartments, and those of your daughter, you are at liberty to transform and deform as you will, but the state rooms of this castle shall not, so long as I am master of it, present such monstrous incongruities

as you propose. I have gone to great expence and trouble in collecting the most rare and antique furniture, to suit the character of these magnificent old apartments; and no barbarous taste, not even yours, shall be allowed to deface them by the modern trash you talk of."

"You are very polite, certainly," replied her ladyship; "however, I am quite indifferent about the matter, although, as it was *my* fortune which gave you the means of furnishing the place at all, I think *my* taste might have been consulted."

Lord Ethelwode bit his lip, and walked away again to the window. Lights and tea arrived just in time to break the sullen silence which succeeded; and with them came bounding in Ellen Percival, overflowing with happiness at the change from the confinement of London to the freedom and manifold delights of the country, and her hands already full of flowers fresh gathered from the gardens. Even the presence of her step-father, of whom she generally stood in great awe, could not check her merry prattle; and it was well that it did not, for her childish and unfeigned delight in her new abode won back a smile to his haughty countenance.

"But, good gracious, Ellen," said her mother, after listening languidly to her for awhile, "where have you been? you are all damp with the dew. You will catch your death of cold, child. How

could Mary be so foolish as to let you go out at this time of night?"

"Mary did not let me, mamma. I chose to go, and ran away from her. I went about the garden all alone, and picked these flowers for you. Mary was so frightened when she could not find me."

"For shame, Ellen! how could you be so naughty?"

Ellen denied that there was any naughtiness in choosing to be free, and passionately protested that she would not be shut up in that hot, dark nursery. She might as well be in London.

"Well, my darling, do not cry. I suppose you must do as you like. If Mary cannot manage you, I am sure I cannot. Only do not cry, and make mamma's head ache. There, go and wish your papa good night, and go to bed."

"He is not my papa, and I won't wish him good night," answered the child, as she ran off, out of the sound of her mother's feeble—"For shame, Ellen!"

Lord Ethelwode's meditations that night, as he sat alone in the deserted saloon, after his wife had retired to rest, were not as pleasant as he had anticipated they would be on the day when he returned, rich and prosperous, to inhabit the home of his fathers. He had believed that if he could see that ancestral home restored to its

former splendour, and himself enabled to dwell in it as became the head of his ancient house, he should be happy. For the gold which would enable him do this, he had sacrificed his independence, and sold his faith to a woman whom he could neither love nor esteem, and now he discovered that his anticipated happiness was marred by that woman's indifference and want of sympathy, and vulgar pride in the wealth she had bestowed on him. He felt angry and aggrieved, and was ready to quarrel with his wife and with fortune; as if, having married not for sympathy or companionship, but for gold, and having obtained gold, he had a right to require any thing else withal.

There are many men besides Lord Ethelwode who fall into the mistake of supposing that, when they have laboured to attain one thing which seemed to them most desirable, and have attained it, all other desirable things, for which they never laboured, should be added thereunto.

CHAPTER II.

“ Their only labour was to kill the time—
And labour dire it is, and weary woe.
They sit, they loll, turn o'er some idle rhyme,
Then, rising sudden, to the glass they go,
Or saunter forth with tottering steps and slow ;
This soon too rude an exercise they find ;
Strait on the couch their limbs again they throw,
Where hours on hours they sighing lie reclin'd,
And court the vapoury god soft breathing in the wind.
THOMSON.

Lady Ethelwode was sitting alone at breakfast the next morning, slowly crumbling a hot roll into a cup of *café au lait*. Her beautiful countenance had assumed an expression nearly approaching to ill-humour, and the tone of her replies to little Ellen's multifarious questions had just elicited from the latter the exclamation of “ How cross you are this morning, mamma ! ” when Lord Ethelwode entered the room with a brow as moody as her own, and his hands full of papers. A careless “ how d'ye do ? ” was his only salutation to his wife, as he sate down, and began eating his breakfast with a rapidity which strikingly contrasted with her languid movements.

"Well, I must say," said Lady Ethelwode, after waiting in vain for her husband to break the silence, "that your return home has not improved your sociability. In France you would not have allowed me to wait an hour for breakfast, and then, when you did come, never have asked me how I was after such a journey as we had yesterday."

"I beg pardon, my dear, for my offences against your code of French politeness, but, truly, I was too much vexed when I came in to remember that I was bound to play the lover after eight months of marriage."

"The lover! how ridiculous! As if common politeness was making love. But pray what has vexed you? I thought you were never to be vexed when you got back to your dearly-beloved castle."

"No more I should, if my first object in returning to it were not thwarted by the malice of others. The castle is not worth having if I cannot regain the lands which once belonged to it, and which my father sold so disgracefully to that upstart, Lord Caldwell. I cannot live here to be daily irritated by the sight of that staring white house which he has built within a few yards of the ruins of the old abbey, and just opposite to these windows, on purpose, I believe, to annoy me."

“ Well, really I am sorry that white house is a nuisance to you, for I think it is a very handsome building, and quite a relief to one’s eyes after the gloomy, dingy towers of the castle. It makes the view of those wooded hills so much more cheerful.”

Lady Ethelwode stopped suddenly as her husband pushed his cup from him, and abruptly rose from the table. She had already learned to dread the scowl of his dark eye, and the sneer which curled his lip when she spoke in this manner, although she never could understand the feelings which called them up.

“ But why do you not buy the land, if you are so anxious for it ?” she added, after a minute or two of silence.

“ Why ? Why because that cursed Lord Caldwell, whose father was a cotton-spinner or a tailor, for aught I know, chooses to say he is fond of the place, and will not part with it. But his true reason is, that he is opposed to me in politics, and he will not let me have the land because it would increase my interest in the county.”

“ And who is this tiresome Lord Caldwell ?”

“ I tell you a nobody — an upstart, who has crawled, and crept, and wriggled himself up into political eminence, and was made a peer to give a majority to ministers. A man whose fore-

fathers, if he had any, were vassals of mine, and who dares to withhold from me my ancient patrimony, although I have offered him three times the value of the land."

"That is very provoking, to be sure, especially as there ought to be a larger park attached to such a castle as this. But I cannot understand why you should offer so much for those particular woods, when I suppose you could buy just as good land in another direction from people less obstinate than this Lord Caldwell."

"It is very unlikely you should ever understand any of my feelings," muttered her husband, crushing the papers he held in his hand, and walking towards the door.

"And are you going away already, and leaving me the whole morning alone? What am I to do with myself? Come, Ethelwode, don't be so cross. Stay with me—or, if you are going out, shall I go with you?"

The musical voice, and the beautiful face upturned to his, were not without effect on her husband, and he answered, in a mollified tone,

"I am going to ride to H—— on business, so you cannot come with me, love. But you will find plenty of books and your harp in your own sitting-room; and there is Ellen to keep you company, and by and by, no doubt, you will

have plenty of visitors, as, by this time, all the neighbourhood knows of our arrival."

"Country visitors! what a bore!" yawned her ladyship; "coming, too, of course, to offer congratulations, and all manner of *mal-à-propos*."

"I am sorry you consider congratulations on your marriage with me to be *mal-à-propos*."

"Nonsense! I did not mean that, of course. But why cannot you stay with me?"

"I am no carpet-knight, and cannot amble all day long in a lady's chamber. Besides, I must go out on business. Good bye, my love."

"Good bye. So like men—business is always their excuse for avoiding what they do not like. I wish women had some business, too."

However, as Lady Ethelwode could not think of any business that a woman could have, she sauntered through the magnificent suite of apartments, in search of something to while away the long, weary morning. She reached at length the room which Lord Ethelwode had destined for her boudoir, and which he had provided with every luxury art could invent and wealth command.

It was the last of the suite, and the large mulioned window opened on a stone balcony overhanging a rapid stream. Every rare exotic had been collected on this balcony, and, through the branches of the lofty cedars on the other side of

the stream, glimpses of the hills beyond, and the wide sea, with its bright yellow sands, were visible. The sweet spring air was blowing softly into the room, and wafted up the sleepy sound of the running water. It was a perfect temple of Indolence, and its fair mistress seemed to feel its influence, for she lay down on one of the luxurious couches with half-closed eyes, whilst Ellen sprang out upon the balcony, and flitted about amongst the flowers, looking even fresher and lovelier than they.

"Ellen, give me that book, and put that little table near me. How can you heat yourself so, child, with running in the sun?—you will ruin your complexion. Do get your bonnet, or come and sit still by me."

"Oh, no, mamma! I cannot sit still this fine day, and I hate a bonnet." And, shaking her long auburn curls, she sprang out again, and was back in an instant with her hands full of flowers.

"How long this morning is!" said her mother, yawning. "I got up too early; to-morrow I shall breakfast in bed, for I cannot bear these long mornings by myself."

"Oh, mamma, I wish you would get up, and walk with me before breakfast—it is so pleasant! And, if you would play with me a little now, I am sure the morning would not seem so long."

“Nonsense, child ! Do you suppose I have nothing else to do than to act as your nursery-maid ? You had better go to Mary, if you want to play.”

Ellen did not want to play just then, but she could not imagine what her mother had to do that should prevent her playing with her. However, as she had gathered as many flowers as she wished for, she consented to sit quietly on the floor, and amuse herself with arranging them into nosegays, whilst her mother tried to sleep away the time she could find no other means to get rid of.

Two hours were dozed away quickly enough, and then came luncheon, which occupied full another hour, as Ellen would dine whilst her mother lunched, and she jumped off her chair between every two or three mouthfuls to see the fishing-boats gliding, as it were, between the branches of the trees, and to watch the gradual disappearance of the rocks on the sands as the tide came in. At length, just after she had been coaxed and scolded into saying grace in as cross a tone as possible, the joyful sound of carriage wheels was heard rumbling over the draw-bridge, and Lady Ethelwode, rejoicing in the thoughts that the hours of solitude were over, repaired with unusual alacrity to the drawing-room to receive her visitors.

There was no fear of any more solitude that day. Every one had heard of Lady Ethelwode's beauty and wealth long before her arrival, and all were anxious to pay their homage to the new mistress of Ethelwode Castle, who, it was supposed, would, from her rank and fortune, naturally take the lead in all future society in the neighbourhood. Curiosity, also, had no small share in the matter, for a bride, be she who she may, young or old, poor or rich, however obscure and uncared for she may have been in her single state, becomes at once a *lion* in virtue of her orange blossoms; and, of all brides, Lady Ethelwode, young, rich, beautiful, the chosen of the most fastidious peer in the whole county, who had disappointed the hopes of half the disposable young ladies in the neighbourhood, was naturally the most interesting, so carriage succeeded carriage almost without intermission.

Lady Ethelwode, glad to be relieved by any society from the burden of her own, received her visitors with so much grace and graciousness, that they all went away wondering at the rumours of her finery and superciliousness which had been spread not less widely than the report of her wealth and beauty.

The last of the long line of visitors were Mr. Allen, the clergyman of the parish, his wife and grandson, Edward Annesley, a quiet, intelligent-

looking boy, of thirteen or fourteen. Lady Ethelwode, tired of the exertion of so much affability, rose to receive them with even more than her usual supercilious indifference; but, to her astonishment, she found that, with them, the "insolence of condescension" was out of her power. She had seen, with surprise, the deference and courtesy with which they were treated by Lord Ethelwode, who came in with them; but now she herself felt the influence of their manner, simple and unpretending as it was, and found herself obliged to lay aside the impertinence of fine ladyism, with which she had received them, and treat them with the same courtesy she had secretly sneered at in her husband.

"I am very glad to see you once more amongst us, my lord," said Mr. Allen. "Poor Ethelwode seemed quite deserted whilst you and the Conways were both absent."

"Are not the Conways yet returned, then?" asked Lord Ethelwode.

"No; but they will be here soon, I trust, unless, which God forbid, Lady Eleanor grows worse. I heard from Sir Charles to-day, and he talks of being home at the beginning of next month."

In answer to Lady Ethelwode's inquiry, of "Who are these Conways?" Mrs. Allen explained, that Sir Charles was a baronet of old family and large fortune, whose place, Oaklands, adjoined

Lord Ethelwode's, their two parks being only divided by a narrow lane. His wife, Lady Eleanor, had long been in a precarious state of health, and they had gone abroad with their only child, a little girl of Ellen's age, in hopes that a warmer climate would do for her what every exertion of medical skill had failed of doing in England.

"I fear, however," added Mrs. Allen, "that their hope has been disappointed; Sir Charles writes in a very desponding tone. If she is taken away, the world will lose one of its best and brightest ornaments, her husband the best wife, her child the best mother, the poor their best friend!"

"How very melancholy!" said Lady Ethelwode, listlessly, whilst Mrs. Allen turned away to hide the tears which had risen to her eyes.

In the meanwhile, Ellen, who had grown tired of sitting still, and being unnoticed, had seized upon Edward Annesley, and, notwithstanding his entreaty, that she would allow him to finish looking over the book of prints, which he vainly protested he liked much better than all the gardens in the world, she dragged him off to see her darling flowers, and the trout in the clear stream, which she had only discovered this morning, and which she had been longing, ever since, to shew to somebody else, who might share in her delight. Unfortunately, Edward

knew the stream of old, and could not shew as much surprise as she expected, when she triumphantly shewed him the speckled trout, glancing from side to side, in the clear water. His admiration of the flowers, however, made up for his indifference to the trout.

"I am so glad you like flowers!" she exclaimed. "I am sure I shall like you now. What is your name—how old are you?"

"My name is Edward Annesley, and I shall thirteen next birthday."

"Thirteen! how very old! I am only six and a half," said Ellen, with a sigh.

"And what is your name?"

"Ellen Percival."

"But why is your name Percival and your mamma's Lady Ethelwode?"

"I don't know," said Ellen, looking puzzled; "mamma did not use to be called Lady Ethelwode; but ever since that tall, dark man came to live with us, Mary has called her 'my lady,' and she says I ought to call him 'papa;' but I won't, because I know he is not my papa, and I do not like him. Was that your papa and mamma you came with?"

"No; they are my grandfather and grandmother. I have no father or mother."

"And where do you live?"

"At the parsonage, down in the village. You

cannot see it from here, though you can see the church tower, which is quite near it. Perhaps you will come there some day."

Ellen thought she should like to come very much, especially if there were any flowers there. Edward assured her there were plenty of flowers at the parsonage, though not such fine ones as those in the castle gardens. There were roses and geraniums, but no camelias like these.

"Are these camelias? How do you know their names?"

"Grandpapa knows the names of all the flowers. He is very fond of them, and has books about them, and he has given me one to read."

"Can you read to yourself?" said Ellen, looking up to him with more respect than she had yet shewn. "How very nice that must be! I wish I could read books about flowers, I am so fond of them. Will you teach me? I should like you to teach me, because you do not look cross like Mary, and you would not be always saying, 'Mind, what are you about, Miss Percival!'"

Edward laughed, and said he thought he could teach her, and that he should like it, if his grandfather would allow him, and Lady Ethelwode had no objection.

"Oh! mamma will have no objection, she always lets me do as I like, because she cannot

bear to be teased about it. And you can teach me the names of the flowers, too, and that will be so nice! When shall we begin?"

"My play-hours are before breakfast, and in the afternoon; so I can teach you at either time. But I must speak to grandpapa about it first."

Mr. Allen's consent was accordingly asked, and, to Ellen's great joy, granted, without any more delay than was necessary to ascertain that Lady Ethelwode had no objection to the scheme. Ellen had rightly judged that her mother would have no objection to any thing which did not involve personal trouble to herself. In fact, Lady Ethelwode thought it an excellent plan, as Ellen would be kept quiet, in consequence, at least an hour every day, and she should escape Mary's everlasting complaints of Miss Percival's idleness and inattention to her book. So it was settled with mutual satisfaction on all sides that, whenever it was fine, the children should meet either at the parsonage, or in the castle gardens, and that Ellen's course of tuition should begin forthwith.

Ellen now looked forward to her reading lesson as the greatest pleasure of the day. It was so new to her to have a companion, to find sympathy and active kindness in any one, that she soon learnt to love her young tutor with all the warmth of her little heart. He was so patient,

so gentle, and yet so firm withal, that she looked up to him with a respect mingled with her affection, such as she never felt for any one else. She could confide to him all her childish joys and sorrows, without fear of being checked or chilled by an impatient or careless answer; and he was never weary of answering her interminable questions as they walked or studied together. On his side, he was proud of being of use to her—proud and pleased, too, at being looked up to and loved by his little pupil.

They made a beautiful picture, as oftentimes they sat together beneath the shade of one of the old oaks by the side of Ellen's favourite stream—the pale, thoughtful-looking boy, with the book on his knees, and the bright girl sitting beside him, her eager face upturned to his, or else leaning over the book, her eyes following his finger as he patiently pointed out each separate letter. 'Tis true, she was not always so attentive. Often, in the very middle of a word, she would spring away in chase of a butterfly, or jump up to watch the trout shooting under the shady bank; but his voice always had power to recal her, and his look could at any time chase the frown of ill-humour from her brow.

Mary could not conceive by what magie a boy of thirteen had found means to control and subdue her impetuous, and, to her, uncontrollable

charge. His influence was even felt in his absence; for, in Ellen's most towering passions, the question: "What would Master Edward say, if he saw you now, Miss Percival?" always had the effect of silencing her screams and recalling her to a gentler mood.

Lady Ethelwode was equally surprised, though she gave herself no further trouble about the matter than to say how fortunate it was somebody could teach Ellen—and really, since she got on so well with Edward Annesley, there was no use in troubling herself about getting a governess till after her confinement.

And thus began Ellen's education.

CHAPTER III.

"She's gone and left me ; and the place she fill'd
In my heart is empty—empty. She has done
Her travail : but my task is still to roam
On through the world."

BARRY CORNWALL.

It has been said by philosophers that Time is a thing which has no real independent existence, that it is not a law of universal nature, but only a form of human thought, one of the conditions of the mind in its earthly tenement ; and, when we look abroad, and see how differently men measure, according to their different circumstances, the selfsame portions of time, the philosopher's mysterious theory seems realized into a practical truth. Does the happy lover on the eve of the day which is to give him his beloved for ever, as he lies wakeful and restless from feverish joy, measure that night as the condemned convict in his cell, to whom the morrow brings an ignominious death ? Is that period of time the same to both, as the one watches it out in a dream of love and blessedness, whilst the other wakes for the first time from *his* dream, to know the reality of death and eternity, and

not only lives over again the long past of crime and misery, but, in fearful anticipation, lives through the endless torment of the future? The chimes of the clock fall with the same sound on the ears of each, but do they measure to each an equal period of existence?

So it was with the personages of our tale. So lightly and gladly did the spring pass away with the two children, that it seemed to them but as one long sunny day; but, oh! how differently was that season measured by him who watched, hoping against hope, the last feeble flickerings of that life which was the light of his own existence!

It was thus that Sir Charles Conway watched beside his dying wife; and he counted not the hours like other men. He reckoned them by each pulsation of that feeble frame, by each change of that fading countenance. His world lay within the narrow bounds of her sick room. He had taken her to Italy, when all other hope failed, believing, or persuading himself to believe, that the warmer climate would yet revive the waning spark of life; but the very brilliancy of that foreign land, where all was strange and unfamiliar, seemed to oppress her failing spirit, and she drooped like a transplanted flower. He soon perceived that the change he had anticipated was not for the better, but the worse; and yielding

to her earnest entreaty, he turned homewards again, hoping now (oh, how desperately the heart clings even to the shadow of hope when all its reality is gone !) that the joy of being restored to her beloved home, of breathing once more her native air, would have the healing influence he had sought for in vain from change of scene and climate. For the first few days after their arrival, his fervent expectations seemed realised, for the excitement recalled awhile the bloom to her cheek and brilliancy to her eye ; but the delusion was short lived as its cause.

By the time they reached London, it was evident that the last remnant of strength was exhausted ; and from that hour she sank rapidly and visibly. Her husband watched beside her night and day in silent anguish, and little Louisa often forsook her playthings, and, creeping to her father's knee, gazed with astonished awe on her mother's altered features, where Death was already printing his mysterious characters. She could not understand the change ; but the anxiety of the attendants, the fussy attentions of her aunt, Lady Frances Montague, her father's deep sadness, the gloom and silence of the apartment, weighed upon her young spirits, and made her feel the presence of some great mystery which it would be terror to solve.

One evening that Louisa had thus tak--

place by her father's side, Lady Eleanor begged him to put the child on the bed beside her. She was lifted up accordingly, and the dying mother opened her feeble arms to receive her. She soon nestled down with her head resting on her mother's bosom, and her little hand caressing her pale cheek, and lay there quite still, till she felt hot tears fall fast upon her hand. She was frightened as she looked up and saw them rolling down her mother's face, and began to cry.

"Hush, my precious one," said her mother, pressing her more closely to her bosom, "hush, I will kiss away the tears."

"Let me take her away," said her husband; "you are not strong enough for this."

"No, no, leave her; leave her a little while longer; it will be the last time."

"Eleanor, Eleanor, do not say so; I thought you were better to-night; I hoped—"

"It is too late to hope now," said Lady Eleanor, gently.

Sir Charles threw himself on his knees beside her, and laid his head on the pale thin hand she stretched out to him, in agony too deep for words. Both remained silent for many minutes. At length Lady Eleanor spoke again.

"Charles, dearest Charles, look up, look up; do not let me see you despair. You have always been my strength, my support; will you fail me

now in this last and hardest trial? Oh, you do not know how weak, how faithless I am, when I think of this poor motherless child."

She had chosen the best method of rousing her husband from his trance of misery. He raised his head, and, drawing her nearer to him, strove to soothe and cheer her by the most solemn assurance that her child should be cherished by him as his best and only treasure.

"I know you will cherish her," said Lady Eleanor, speaking more earnestly; "but it is more still that I ask of you. Will you watch over her, dearest Charles, in all the detail of her little life? Will you guard her young heart from being checked or chilled in its loving faith? Will you keep her from ever feeling the aching want of a mother's love? I know that this is a weary and difficult task for a man; but I remember how often we have talked over together our plans for that dear child; how you first taught me the high purpose of education, and made me feel that a mother's vocation is the noblest that Heaven can entrust to a human being; and now it is the task you taught me to perform, that I bequeath to you. It is a solemn charge; will you undertake it? Will you be to her all that I would have been—mother, friend, instructor, guide?"

"Yes, all, more than all, if it be possible," replied her husband. "For this child will I hence-

forth live; here, on your death-bed, Eleanor, I solemnly promise to fulfil to the utmost our joint duty to her. I will teach her to follow in her mother's footsteps; to trust to the same hope; to cling to the same faith; and when we meet in another world, may God and you bear me witness that I have redeemed my pledge!"

"Now then I may die in peace," exclaimed Lady Eleanor, her features lighting up with a gleam of joy. "May God bless you for the comfort you have given me! Lift up the child; let me have her in my arms once more: farewell, my own darling; may God for ever bless you! Charles, I commit her to Him and to you; tell her, in after years, of the mother who is now leaving her. One more kiss, my child, my own blessed one! Love your father; be to him all that I have been, and more. God bless you both! Take her away now, Charles, I feel that I am going fast."

The subdued and awe-stricken child was quietly lifted off the bed by her father, and allowed herself to be carried quietly away. Lady Eleanor was right in her foreboding that it was her last farewell. A few hours afterwards the silver chord was broken which binds the immortal soul to its earthly dwelling-place, and her pure spirit had departed to its home.

Her husband led his sister-in-law from the

room, and, leaving her to give way to her noisy lamentations, returned to watch in solitude beside the bed of death. We will not follow him into that sacred privacy of grief. If the strong soul warring against despair was for a moment subdued, no mortal eye witnessed the defeat; if the Christian's faith forsook him in that dark hour, and he doubted that the blow which struck him to the earth was dealt in mercy, no mortal ear heard the rebellious murmur.

When summoned from his solitary communings to perform the last duties towards the dead, he appeared calm and self-possessed, as one who had manned himself to run to the end the race set before him; with the same uncomplaining fortitude he left Louisa with her aunt and departed for his home, there to deposit the lifeless remains of her who had hitherto been its life and sunshine.

CHAPTER IV.

"Wouldst thou plant for eternity, then plant in the deep, infinite faculties of man, his heart, and phantasy. Wouldst thou plant for year and day, then plant into his shallow, superficial faculties, his self-love, and arithmetical understanding, what will grow therein."

CARLYLE.

Sir Charles Conway returned to town almost immediately after the funeral, for he had not courage to trust himself alone in his desolate home. When his child should be with him, he thought he should be better able to encounter the recollections with which every object assailed him there; and he resolved to hasten the business he had to settle in town, and to return with Louisa as quickly as possible.

Lady Frances Montague was greatly astonished, and still more shocked, when she heard of this determination. Was it possible that he meant to bury himself and his daughter in that remote county, to give up all advantages of society for himself and education for her? Surely, if he must live in the country, there were houses enough in the neighbourhood of London; and he might place Louisa in any one of the many ex-

cellent educational establishments she could point out to him, where the daughters of several particular friends of hers had been brought up, and where the instruction was first-rate, such as Louisa could not have at Oaklands, even with the best of governesses.

The lady was still more astonished when Sir Charles quietly assured her that he did not mean to have a governess at all, and that he intended to educate his child himself.

"You may try, my dear Sir Charles," she replied with an incredulous smile, "but you will soon give it up: no man could do it. I predict, that in less than six months you will write me word that you are bored to death with the thing, and beg me to find a school or a governess for Louisa. I should offer at once to take charge of her myself, but I am sure you see that it would be impossible for me to attempt it. I cannot perform my duties to my own children as I could wish. I am too anxious, too nervous; and any additional responsibility would be more than I could bear; but if you decide on leaving Louisa in town, I will promise to look after her."

Sir Charles thanked his sister, both for the kindness she offered and for that she withheld, but again assured her his mind was made up, and no earthly consideration would induce him to part with his child. It was not, he said, in his

eyes even a matter of choice ; it was a task imposed by Heaven, of which he could not shake off the responsibility, even though he devolved the trouble upon another ; and he dared not trust to any other the formation of his child's character, on which depended the happiness of her whole life here and hereafter.

This was a way of looking at the subject quite new to Lady Frances, and, as she thought, very high-flown and incomprehensible. But as her arguments seemed equally unreasonable to Sir Charles, she gave up the point, and took leave of him, not without many sighs over poor Louisa's hapless fate, and many forebodings that he would ruin the child, and then he would repent not having followed her advice.

"I hope we shall see you at Oaklands in the autumn, my dear Frances," said her brother ; "and when you come you will find Louisa thriving in body and mind, notwithstanding your predictions."

"I trust so, though I fear you will be disappointed in your expectations. For her sake and for yours, as I know I shall be a comfort to you, I will try and prevail upon myself to visit that place again. It will be a great trial ; but I must not think of this, or my feelings will overpower me. Good bye, good bye, my dear Sir Charles ! Take care of poor dear Louisa, since you will

have her; but if you should change your mind, remember that I shall be quite as ready as if we had never differed, to assist you in carrying out any plans you may form for her."

Sir Charles once more thanked her, saying at the same time, however, that he did not think it likely that he should change his mind; and Lady Frances departed, inwardly marvelling at his obstinacy and folly.

A few days afterwards, Sir Charles returned to Oaklands with his little charge. He had well judged that he should need all his fortitude, all the support his child's presence could give him, to bear the aspect of his desolate dwelling. Every spot in the grounds, every room in the house, every familiar object, was connected with the thoughts of the dead. Her image seemed to haunt every scene where she had once moved, shedding light and gladness around her; and it needed all the energy of a mind of no common strength, to resist the overwhelming influence.

Often, after a long weary day of forced occupation, when the quiet evening had closed in, and little Louisa had been carried away to bed by the old nurse, who had been her mother's also, and Sir Charles was left alone by his solitary fireside, he felt that, but for his promise to the departed to live for her child, he should give up the struggle, and yield up a life of which he

was weary. Even his faith, strong as it was, well nigh forsook him in those gloomy hours, and he was ready to exclaim, "It is better for me to die than to live."

But these seasons of weakness and despondency grew less and less frequent as time wore on, and gave him with each new effort new strength to perform his task. Even in his darkest moods, his child's caresses had power to rouse him, and day by day his interest became stronger in the task he had undertaken, till he learnt to feel that he had yet something left him worth living and struggling for. Notwithstanding Lady Frances's prophecies of the impossibilities of such a thing, he devoted himself to Louisa with the entire, unselfish, patient devotion, of which women alone are generally supposed capable. He had promised to supply the want of a mother to her; and with a mother's care he watched over the development of that young and tender being, and gave, almost with a mother's gentleness, the guidance and gradual instruction that is needed, and fostered and trained, with a mother's earnest brooding love, each good and noble faculty of her mind.

The bitterness of grief, the aching sense of solitude, passed away from him as he gave himself, heart and soul, to the task, and a deeper and holier joy than he had ever known sprung up in his

heart as he watched, day by day, his child's noble nature unfold itself in the genial atmosphere of love, and truth, and purity, in which she lived, and looked forward to the full fruition of the hopes now only budding into bloom.

Lady Frances came in the autumn, as she had promised, bringing with her her two little girls, who were about the same age as Louisa. She had come prepared to triumph over Sir Charles, on seeing all her predictions verified, and she was not a little disappointed, and still more astonished, to find him neither tired of his undertaking, nor more inclined to follow her advice concerning Louisa than he had been six months before. It was some compensation to find that his system of education was fully as absurd as she expected. Louisa was woefully ignorant, as she took the first opportunity of telling her brother, in all things which she considered essentials in her education. What was the use of her knowing the names and uses of all the objects, animate and inanimate, she was in the habit of seeing; of being acquainted with flowers and shells, birds, beasts, and fishes, when she was absolutely ignorant of even the elements of history and chronology; could not read a word of French, and had not even heard of the five positions in dancing!

“Time enough for every thing, even the five

positions, my dear Frances," was Sir Charles's invariable answer, whilst he still persevered in the reprobated system; and Lady Frances was obliged to give up her attack for the time, though she never failed to renew it the very next day, or perhaps the next hour.

The little girls were nearly as much astonished at Louisa's ways as Lady Frances was at her father's. They could not understand how it happened that Louisa was never happy in her father's absence, whilst they voted their mother a terrible bore. Moreover, Louisa's unbending love of truth was at times very inconvenient, when they got into any childish scrapes. No argument, threat, or bribe, could induce her to say any thing but the truth; though she often left untold, except when asked the direct question, what would have exonerated her from the blame, and thrown it, where it was due, on her cousins. It was impossible to make her comprehend any thing like trick, or cunning, or evasion; and her straightforward dealing often disconcerted not only her cousins, but her aunt, who was as fond of finessing and manœuvring as weak minds generally are. Lady Frances and her daughters, who did not often agree, were quite of the same opinion on this subject—that they could make nothing either of Louisa or her father.

The party at Oaklands was soon increased, by

the arrival of Reginald Talbot, Sir Charles Conway's ward, and Arthur St. John, the son of a distant relation, who was his heir-at-law, both fine, high-spirited boys, several years older than the other children. Edward Annesley, who had been a schoolfellow, and was still a great friend, of Reginald's, now often came over to Oaklands, from the Rectory, and he was not seldom accompanied by Ellen Perceval, whose actions were left perfectly uncontrolled by her indolent mother.

The house, which had so lately been the abode of silence and mourning, now resounded with the voice of boyish mirth, the laughter and the sports of the young and gay. Sir Charles had prepared himself for this; and when he had conquered his reluctance to what could not but seem, at first, a kind of profanation—a sacrilege to the memory of the dead—his benevolent mind took pleasure in witnessing the young people's joyous mirth, and sympathised in their thoughtless, unclouded gladness of spirit, till his solitary and wounded heart forgot some part of his own sorrows in the happiness of others.

Not so Lady Frances, who held all schoolboys in utter aversion, and who, from the moment they entered the house, lived in perpetual anxiety lest her little girls should be contaminated by their society and example. She

ficiently express her astonishment at Sir Charles allowing Louisa to be their constant companion, and she declared herself perfectly shocked at Lady Ethelwode's total neglect of her child's manners and complexion. Her indignation, in this case, was a little increased by the mortification with which she perceived that Ellen's beauty wholly eclipsed her own pretty Minna's : and that Fanny, though the pride of Madame Gambade's dancing academy, looked stiff and awkward, when brought into contrast with Ellen's untutored and fairy-like grace of form and motion. Finding Sir Charles wholly deaf to all her warnings of the ruin to which he was exposing Louisa, she resolved to go over to the castle, to try her eloquence on Lady Ethelwode, with the view of persuading her of the impropriety of allowing Ellen to run wild as she did.

She was not more successful with her than with Sir Charles. Lady Ethelwode thought Lady Frances's educational manners more absurd than her own neglect.

"I am sure *I* never was taught any of these things," was her answer to her friend's remonstrances, "and I have got on in the world as well as most people, and I hope Ellen will do the same ; with such a face as her's, who will care whether she knows any thing or not ?"

There was no denying the beauty of the face

—nor that it was exquisite enough to make any one forget to inquire into the accomplishments of the possessor. So Lady Ethelwode remained perfectly satisfied with the conviction so pleasing to her indolence—that the “*Laissez-faire*” system was the only rational system of education, and Ellen was left to grow, as she had hitherto done, like the wild flowers she so dearly loved, receiving only such education as nature and circumstances administered.

Notwithstanding their disagreement on this important point, the two ladies had rapidly progressed into intimacy; and when Lady Frances announced her intention of leaving Oaklands, Lady Ethelwode entreated her to remain till after her confinement, which was soon to take place, and which was looked forward to as a momentous event by her husband and all who depended upon him, in hopes that she would give birth to an heir to the house and lands of Ethelwode. These hopes were soon fulfilled; and Lord Ethelwode, as he held his infant son in his arms, and presented him to his assembled tenantry, felt that the proudest wish of his heart had been granted to him. Bells were rung, bonfires blazed, oxen were roasted whole, ale flowed like water; high and low, gentle and simple, were convened to partake of the baron’s hospitality, which was worthy of the barbarous mag-

nificence of his Saxon forefathers ; and the baron himself would have been the happiest man in England, but for the sight of Lord Caldwell's white house reminding him that the fairest portion of those forefathers' domains had passed into the hands of a lowborn stranger.

As soon as the joyous excitement, and the round of festivities caused by this event, were at an end, Lady Frances prepared to leave Oaklands. With many parting admonitions to her brother-in-law on the subject of Louisa's appearance and manners, she, the French governess, the accomplished children, and the train of nurses and lady's maids, drove off, leaving Sir Charles feeling more happy than he had done for many months before.

Snatching up Louisa in his arms, he threw away the green veil and French spelling book her aunt had left her as a legacy, and running through the library and out upon the lawn, he at length tossed the laughing child upon a heap of new-mown grass, and threw himself beside her with a delicious sensation of relief and freedom.

CHAPTER V.

“ The situation that has not its duty, its ideal was never yet occupied by man. Yes, here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despised actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy ideal. Work it out therefrom ; and working, believe, live, be free ! ”

CARLYLE.

Twelve years passed away—twelve years, so uneventful in external circumstances, however momentous in the inward history of each individual, that for the purposes of our tale it will suffice to say that they had passed. Sir Charles Conway had taken his daughter abroad when she reached the age at which girls generally go out ; and they were now just returned home, after an absence of two years. The London season being over, Lady Frances Montague and her two daughters had come down to meet them ; and thus the same party was once more assembled at Oaklands, with the exception of Reginald Talbot and Arthur St. John, the former of whom had entered the career of diplomacy, and was already considered one of the most rising men of the day ; whilst the latter had obtained an appointment in his Majesty's Life Gu-

won for himself no mean reputation in the highest circles of London exclusivism.

Years had done nothing towards diminishing the differences of opinion and practice between Sir Charles Conway and Lady Frances Montague, or those of character and pursuits between Louisa and her cousins. They had grown up from childhood to womanhood, and their parents were severally beginning to reap the fruits of the harvest they had sown.

Lady Frances had laboured more consistently and successfully than many who profess a higher aim, and she had attained her object. Her daughters' dress, manners, and appearance were unexceptionable, their accomplishments much above par. Fanny's singing made her sought after by all concert givers in London, and Minna had always more partners at a ball than any other girl in the room.

Lady Frances rejoiced in the proud consciousness that she had fulfilled to the utmost her duties towards them: it was for them to do the rest, and by the means which she had bestowed upon them, to procure themselves an advantageous settlement in life. When this was accomplished, she felt she should have nothing left to wish for.

Sir Charles's joy was of a different kind, as his views and aims had been; and, as he took

once more his accustomed seat in the old library, he gratefully contrasted his present return with that melancholy arrival twelve years before, when he stood on his desolate hearth a lonely, cheerless, broken-hearted man, and hardly feeling that he had strength enough within him to perform his duty towards the only being that was left him to cherish. The effort which had then seemed so painful had long been made, and he was now reaping the reward of his incessant devotion to his child, in her unbounded affection and reverence, in her sympathy for all her pursuits and pleasures, and in the companionship which daily grew dearer to him. If sometimes he regretted that her separation from the softening influence of female society had given a shade of sternness to her manner, and left her wanting in many of the lesser graces and accomplishments of her sex, this was only a passing trouble; it could not disturb his deep joy in her strength of mind, her cultivated intellect, her noble and generous spirit, and he felt that he had amply redeemed his pledge to her beloved mother.

“Well, and what do you think of my girls?” was Lady Frances’s first question when she found herself alone with Sir Charles.

“I think they are very handsome, agreeable girls, and well fitted, as far as I can judge, to

take their place in the sphere in which you wish them to move."

"Yes, I flatter myself they are; and I think, Sir Charles, that you must give me credit now for understanding something about the education of girls, though you always refused to follow my advice about Louisa."

"I have always given you credit for adapting your means to the end you had in view;—my end was a different one, and it was therefore necessary that I should use different means to attain it. Since we are equally satisfied with the results of our labours, there is no use in discussing the matter further."

Lady Frances willingly changed the subject, for she felt that she could not, in the face of Louisa's plain features and unfashionable manners, return the compliment he had paid to her daughters; and her next question was, when did he mean to bring Louisa out?

"She is out, as far as I understand the word. She has been at the head of my establishment for more than two years."

"Yes, I know that; but you have been abroad during these two years, and you seem to have entered very little into society during that time. Now, dear Louisa wants society;—she wants polishing. You know how fond I am of her, so you will not mind my speaking openly. A Lon-

don season would do wonders for her, with a little help from me and her cousins. Besides, you should really begin to think of her establishment in life. She is twenty already, you know."

Sir Charles was ready with his old answer, that there was time enough to think of that. He meant to go to London next spring; and in the meanwhile he hoped Louisa's prospects would not be injured by her having no other society than the neighbourhood afforded.

"Poor Louisa!" said her aunt, in a pathetic tone. "And so she is to remain for another year buried alive in this gloomy place!"

"A very comfortable way of being buried alive, at all events," said Louisa, who had come into the room with her cousins as her aunt uttered these words; "with this house for a coffin, and the sky for a vault, and air, and sunshine, and pleasant society, instead of 'the worms creeping in and the worms creeping out.' The land of the living can scarcely be made more desirable."

"Louisa turns every thing into ridicule," said Lady Frances, angrily, "and I must say I do not approve of it. It is not at all becoming in a young person to be so sarcastic; nothing succeeds less in good society."

"You forget, mamma," exclaimed her eldest daughter Minna, "that Louisa would not for the world confess she would like to go out. It

would be quite beneath her dignity to care for any thing so frivolous as a ball."

"I imagine Louisa would think it much more beneath her dignity to be insincere," said Sir Charles.

A bright idea had flashed across Lady Frances's mind at the mention of the word ball. Why should not Sir Charles give a ball at Oaklands? It would be an excellent way of bringing Louisa out with proper *éclat* in the county, and of renewing their intercourse with the neighbourhood after their long absence.

"I wonder it never struck me before how well this house is adapted to that sort of thing," said she; "the saloon will make a capital ball-room, opening as it does into the conservatory; then, the two drawing-rooms, and the library, and poor dear Eleanor's boudoir (though it would be a sore trial to my feelings to see strangers in that room) might be opened *en suite*; and the lawn could be lighted with coloured lamps; it would be quite splendid. Do pray, my dear Sir Charles, fix a day, and let me write the invitations at once."

Minna and Fanny bent eagerly forward in expectation of their uncle's answer; Louisa had read it already in his countenance.

"If I thought Louisa wished it——" he began,

"Of course Louisa wishes it!" exclaimed both mother and daughters.

But Louisa begged to speak for herself. She knew that to a man of her father's grave and retired habits nothing could be more irksome or annoying than to have his house thrown into confusion, to receive a crowd of strangers; and she quietly said that she was sorry to disappoint her cousins; but she had no wish that her father should give a ball at Oaklands.

"Well," said Lady Frances, "I do think—I must say—I confess I should be sorry to see my girls so unnatural, so forgetful of others. I could not bear to see them setting themselves up as being so superior to the rest of the world, and thinking and judging so coolly for themselves."

Notwithstanding her aunt's angry disapprobation, Louisa remained firm in her decision; and as Sir Charles was equally so in his, of acting according to her wishes, it was evident that there was no hope of a ball being given at Oaklands. Lady Frances, however, would not give up the idea of a ball altogether; and she told Minna that evening that she should go over to the castle the next day, and try what could be done with Lady Ethelwode. Ellen was nearly eighteen, and it was high time that she should be brought out; and a mother could not be so insensible to

her daughter's advantage as Sir Charles chose to be.

"I am afraid," said Minna, "this plan will turn out more hopeless than the last. Poor lazy Lady Ethelwode will be frightened into fits at the thoughts of the fatigue; besides, it would require a forty-horse power to get her out of her *chaise longue* to receive her guests."

"But she need not leave it unless she chooses. Ellen can do all that. Leave it to me. I will go over to-morrow morning, and manage it all. You shall have your ball, my dear girls; and I am sure you ought to be thankful for having a mother to slave for you, as I do."

The young ladies were thankful. Their mother's merits shone highly in contrast with Sir Charles Conway, or Lady Ethelwode; and they were much more ready to acknowledge them, since she had directed her activity on their behalf to gaiety instead of education.

The next morning, Lady Frances, accompanied by Louisa, who was, however, left in ignorance of the real object of the visit, drove over to Ethelwode Castle, to make her attack upon its fair and indolent mistress. They found her, as usual, in the boudoir, where she was last seen by our readers. Every thing was unchanged in that delicious apartment. The subdued light, the murmur of the stream, the rich scent of the flowers,

the gorgeous furniture, all were the same. The hand of time had left no visible trace on the luxurious scene, save in the enlarged and less graceful proportions of the lady who reclined there, listening with half-shut eyes to the novel her daughter's Italian governess was reading aloud.

Twelve years had passed over Lady Ethelwode's head like one long dull dream, leaving on her as few traces of their passage as on the trees in her garden. Like them, she had vegetated on, equally indifferent to every event which did not effect her own animal existence; but, unlike them, she had borne neither fruit nor flower, she had neither ministered to the wants of man nor gladdened his heart.

Lady Frances had been casting about in her mind, all the time of the drive, how she should manage to get Louisa out of the way, as the latter's straightforward dealing was likely to interfere with the success of her intended manœuvres. But Louisa herself saved her all trouble on this score; for, feeling no relish for her aunt's and Lady Ethelwode's conversation, she soon left them together, and went away in search of Ellen. The friendship between the two girls, which had begun in childhood, had become stronger and closer with each year of their lives, and to it Ellen owed all that she had ever re-

ceived of instruction, or guidance, or even affection. Louisa's stronger mind exercised a great and beneficial influence over her, but it could only partly counteract the effects of neglect and bad example, on a nature endowed with strong passions and a fervid imagination, which it would have required the most careful education to control and regulate. Ellen was still the child of impulse, and it was evident that her lot would be shaped not by herself with the power that strong minds exercise over the external conditions of their existence, but by those into whose hands she might happen to fall, and the circumstances in which she lived.

Louisa directed her steps in search of her to a summer-house in the upper part of the gardens, where she knew she should most likely find her at that hour. This summer-house was built on a knoll behind the castle, which commanded a wide view of sea and land. It was Ellen's favourite haunt; and she would sit there for hours, looking out on the glorious scene below—the richly wooded hills—the dell in which the village seemed to nestle in the sunshine—the creek, with its yellow sands gleaming in bright contrast with the soft green slope, which met them, and whose overhanging trees nearly kissed the waters, when the tide came in—and, more beautiful than all, the wide open sea beyond—beautiful alike in

the sunny calm of summer, or in the dark winter's storm, and ever sending up its low deep murmur through the lighter sounds of rustling leaves and humming insects, entrancing the ear, and thrilling the heart with a power which no other earthly music possesses.

There did Louisa find Ellen that morning. She stopped on the threshold one moment, to contemplate the beauty of the picture the little summer-house presented. Ellen was sitting by the arched window with a book in her hand; but she was not reading; the hand had fallen listlessly on her knee, and she leaned back in the rustic chair in the attitude of one in a deep reverie. A shade of mournfulness was on her brow, and her large blue eyes looked on the rich landscape as if they saw it not; a tear trembled on the long black lashes, and her thoughts were evidently far from the sunny scene before her. As the light from above fell on her exquisitely graceful form, and her chiselled and perfect features, Louisa thought that never had dream of mortal poet conceived, or hand of mortal artist embodied, any thing so surpassingly, so faultlessly lovely. She gazed on her for a few minutes in silence, and then gently went up to her.

"Still dreaming, Ellen!" said she, as she laid her hand on her friend's shoulder. Ellen started up.

"You here, Louisa! What can have brought you over so early?"

"So early! Why, my dear dreamer, you do not seem to know how time passes away. It is past two o'clock!"

"Past two! impossible! I have not heard the gong for luncheon."

"It sounded, however, just as we drove up, and there is my watch for further proof. Look!"

"Yes, I see you are right. How quickly this morning has flown! Well, I am glad to see you, dear Loo; but I did not expect you, as you said in your note, yesterday, that you should not be able to come to-day."

"Nor did I think I should, as I have my aunt and two cousins to entertain; rather a heavy task, with people who have not a taste or a pursuit in common with me. But my aunt took a violent fancy this morning to call on Lady Ethelwode without delay, so, away we came; I left them in the drawing-room, deep in conversation, and came to look for you, and here I have caught you in the very fact of breaking your last good resolution."

"What about my idle day-dreaming?" said Ellen, blushing. "You, who never broke a resolution in your life, must think me very weak; but I really cannot help it."

"This is a most lamentable confession of

weakness—almost too lamentable to be quite credible. Do you not think it sounds rather like a flattering unction laid to one's soul, a sort of excusing one's self to one's self, for not leaving off what is 'pleasant but wrong.'"

"But, after all," said Ellen, evading a direct answer, "what is the harm of my poor dreams, which you wage such war against? What harm can it do me to picture to myself a world brighter and more beautiful than this—beings more pure and noble than the common clay of our earth—love such as the earth cannot give? Why should I for ever plod on in this dull, stale, unprofitable world, when I can forget it awhile in my bright dreams? You are no judge, Louisa, of the force of such a temptation—you who have the happiest of homes, a friend, a companion, in your father, to share in all your feelings and pursuits—you do not know what it is to feel lonely and sick at heart, as I do, when I am away from you—to pine for the affection I cannot obtain, the activity of heart and mind which is denied me—you cannot imagine what it is, at such times, to escape from the realities of a life like this, and to find happiness and freedom at least in dreams."

"And the waking, dearest Ellen?" said Louisa, in a gentler tone, looking sorrowfully on her companion's beautiful countenance; "the waking—is it not all the more bitter for your

having deceived yourself for awhile? Do not the realities of life seem more harsh, its pleasures more insipid, and its duties more difficult to perform, after your mind has been thus ungirded and intoxicated by those delicious dreams?"

Ellen sighed deeply.

"But, Louisa," said she, after a moment's silence, "it is not as if I had any duties to perform; I have none—I am cared for by no one:—no, I am ungrateful—you do care for me, dearest Loo, and so does my brother, I believe; but, besides you two, I am loved by no one, and I am of use to no one. I am of no good to any human being."

"Have you already forgotten, Ellen, the words of your favourite Shakspeare, that you admired so much the other day?

" 'For nought so vile, that on this earth doth live,
But to the earth some special good doth give.'

Look out only on this turf whereon we stand—on this endless variety of plants. Do you think that if there is not one of these—not even the smallest, lowliest flower, but exists for some good purpose—that you, a human being, rich in affections, in capacities, with 'a miraculously gifted head,' and immortal soul—that you are here for no purpose at all—that no good was intended to be produced by your existence—that,

whilst a sphere of action, adapted to its faculties, is provided for every meanest insect, for you there is none—that the all-wise Creator made you, merely to be a useless link in the chain of existence?”

“But, although I feel all this is true, must be true, in theory, I cannot see how it is to be applied. Of what use—what good can I be to any one? I have affections, which I must strive to deaden, for I am not allowed to lavish them on the only beings I could love. I have energies, which I must forcibly keep down, for I have no object on which to exercise them. What can I do in such circumstances as these?”

“Yet, since God has placed you in these circumstances, they must be the sphere in which he meant you to act, and your work must be within them, if you could but discover it.”

“Ay, there’s the rub,” said Ellen. “Only find my work, and I will do it.”

“You will not find it in such books as this,” replied Louisa, pointing to a volume of Lord Byron, which lay open on Ellen’s knee. “It is not through the medium of a mind ungirded by luxury, and embittered by the consciousness of having been false to its own nobler aspirations, that you must look on actual life, in search of your appointed work therein. It is in the truth, not in fiction, that you must seek for it—in the

truth, which lies around you, could you but discern it, in every work of God—the truth which is more plainly interpreted in His word. Look more closely into those very circumstances you complain of;—the meanest of human beings exercises an influence for good or evil on those around him—think you that, gifted as you are, you exercise none? Christ came on earth to minister unto men, not to be ministered unto. Can you, with health, beauty, intellect, wealth, minister to none of His creatures, less gifted than yourself? To look no farther than your own welfare, have you not talents to cultivate, affections to purify and control, another life beyond this, for which to educate yourself? If you have none of these, then, indeed, I will allow that you have no work to do.”

“Oh, Louisa!” exclaimed Ellen, covering her face with her hands.

Both remained silent for some minutes, till Louisa saw two or three tears slowly trickling through Ellen’s fingers. “This will never do, dear Ellen,” said she, gently kissing her as she spoke. “Crying is a bad way to begin a hopeful task, and I shall get scolded by Lady Ethelwode for making your eyes red. Come—now, I have preached my sermon, which, I confess, was long enough to bring tears into any body’s eyes, and have cut you out a lifetime’s work, I

think we had better go back to the house, especially as aunt Frances must have talked Lady Ethelwode into a fever by this time."

Ellen brushed away her tears, and returned Louisa's kiss, saying, "she hoped she would find her sermon had not been thrown away;" and the two girls returned to the castle.

They found Lady Frances in all the triumph of successful diplomacy. She had managed matters so skilfully, that she had not only convinced Lady Ethelwode of the absolute necessity of bringing Ellen out without delay, and the propriety of giving a ball for the purpose, but she had induced Lord Ethelwode to give his consent to the plan, fixing on his son's birthday as that on which the ball was to take place; and persuading him that it was to be given entirely in honour of his youthful heir. This ingenious expedient obviated all the objections which Lord Ethelwode would otherwise have made; and, before Lady Frances left him, the matter was decided upon, and the preliminaries were all settled.

"How very kind of you to take all this trouble for my child, my dear Lady Frances!" said Lady Ethelwode, as her busy friend rose to take her leave; "I am really very much obliged to you."

"Not at all, not at all; I assure you, I never mind trouble when I can be of service to my

friends. To be sure, in this case, I may claim the merit of disinterestedness; for I felt it my duty to go out so much with the girls this year in London, that I am almost sick of the very mention of a ball, and they really care so very little about it, that I have the less inducement to interest myself in any thing of the kind. But there is nothing I would not do for my favourite Ellen."

So saying, she hurried away, leaving Lady Ethelwode wondering at the strength of the affection which could make her friend go through the fatigue of so much activity for any one living.

CHAPTER VI.

"Her words, her looks, her every movement, impressed you with respect; another sort of respect than what was paid to rank or birth. Good sense, good feeling, disclosed itself in all she did. You forgot that more beauty, more softness, might have been required; you felt yourself under the influence of something noble, something stately and earnest, something decisive that lay in her look and gestures; not less attracted to her, than compelled to reverence her."—HEYNE, from *Carlyle's Review*.

The next day Louisa was detained in doors by a slight cold, and, as Minna was engaged to ride with her father, and Lady Frances had visits to pay with Fanny, she was left at home alone. She was rejoicing in the prospect of a long afternoon of uninterrupted occupation, when, on her return to the drawing-room, which she had left to seek for her book, she found a stranger there, who bowed and advanced towards her.

"Will you excuse my having taken the liberty of an old acquaintance, Miss Conway," said he, "in asking for you when I heard that Sir Charles was not at home?"

Louisa bowed, but, far from seeming glad to

meet an old acquaintance, she did not appear even to recognise her visitor.

"I am afraid I am quite forgotten, which is not a little mortifying," resumed the stranger, a tall and very handsome man, somewhere about five-and-twenty; "but if Miss Conway will allow her memory to run back some eight or nine years, perhaps she will recollect a certain old playfellow of hers, Arthur St. John."

"Undoubtedly I do," exclaimed Louisa, her somewhat stiff manner relapsing into cordiality, and her countenance lighting up with the peculiarly bright smile which made her at times look almost beautiful, "though I certainly did not recognise him in you. It is but a fair *revanche*, however, for I remember that in those days your contempt for the amusements and conversation of little girls was much more mortifying than my natural difficulty just now in recognising you after such a lapse of years could possibly be."

"Oh, pray do not let your memory extend to the sins of my youth!" exclaimed Mr. St. John. "I have no doubt I was a brute, as all school-boys are, and only claim to be remembered that I may not be received as a stranger."

Louisa readily allowed his claim, and granted him the permission he asked, to wait in her society for her father's return. His reminiscences of their childish days had at once banished the

formality of a first meeting. She went on with her drawing, whilst he took his seat beside her as if they had only parted the day before.

"But how is it, Miss Conway," said St. John, after they had talked for some time, "that you have so little of a woman's curiosity, as not yet to have asked by what miracle I, a cockney by birth and profession, arrived here unexpectedly at three o'clock in the afternoon?"

"True, I forgot the improbability; but now you have raised my curiosity, pray satisfy it. To what do we owe the honour of Mr. St. John's visit?"

"I came down to the abbey last night with Lord Caldwell, and naturally rushed forth this morning, at the earliest possible hour, to pay my respects here," answered St. John, bowing with mock gravity.

"Lord Caldwell's presence is almost as strange as yours in the county. I scarcely ever remember seeing the abbey look anything but desolate and uninhabited."

"He tells me he intends coming down here more frequently now, which sounds, I think, like an approaching change in the ministry; for such an unwearied politician as Lord Caldwell must think any place distant a hundred miles from Westminster, beyond the limits of the habitable world, unless he were in dudgeon with the ruling

party. The country ought to be grateful to him, for such a life must be horribly irksome."

"The country should be grateful to all who work energetically in its service; but why call it an irksome life?"

"Irksome, *n'est pas le mot*. It is the worst of all possible drudgeries, in my opinion—buried up to the ears all day in parliamentary records and statistical reports, scraping together facts and arguments; on one's legs all night, wasting both upon country squires and Tory lords, whose obtuse brains have no 'weak side of common sense whereat to attack them.' Can anything be more thankless?"

"That must depend upon the nature of the ambition. To a man with a really great and noble object in view, towards which he felt that his efforts were enabling him to draw nearer every day, even such toil as you speak of must lose the name, and become a source of pleasure."

"Well, thank Heaven I never had any ambition! I always had an insurmountable horror of becoming what is called a rising young man; thanks to which, I have escaped being brought into Parliament, and drudging all my life to obtain a garter, or a title, which never comes till your leg is too gouty to wear the one, and the other can only serve the purpose of ornamenting

your tombstone. Lord Caldwell, however, is an exception to the rule. Do you know him?"

"I can hardly say I do, though I have met him. My father knows him very well; they are of the same opinion in politics."

"Yes, I know it; and I suppose that is pretty nearly the only subject on which they do agree. If ever Lord Caldwell should settle in the neighbourhood, Lord Ethelwode will be left in a complete minority."

"He is unfortunately so violent in his opinions, that my father never will discuss politics with him."

"An excellent plan! I wish that more of our political partisans would imitate his example, and cultivate '*un grand talent pour le silence*;' certainly the Frenchman who supposed that this was an English characteristic, had never been to the House of Commons. But, to turn to a more interesting subject, what is become of Lady Ethelwode's pretty daughter?"

"Oh! she is at the castle, and lovelier than ever. Pretty is not the word to apply to her. But I will not attempt to describe her; you will probably see her, and judge for yourself."

"I hope I shall not have to wait long: but is this wonder of the world to be immured for ever in the old castle, like some heroine of ancient times; and we poor mortals without to be tan-

talised by the report of her beauty, which is never to shine upon us?"

"I assure you nobody was ever less immured than Ellen; she is the most fearless wanderer o'er hill and dale."

"Very likely; but you know we Londoners are apt to give the name of *the world* rather exclusively to our own particular portion of it; and it is for that world I am pleading."

"I forgot," said Louisa, smiling. "Well, then, I suppose Ellen will gladden your world with her presence whenever Lady Ethelwode can make up her mind to take so long a journey;—*du reste* there has not been much delay as yet, for she is not eighteen. Perhaps we may make our *débüt* together next spring, and see how we like it."

"You will be singular if you do not like it too well."

"Too well?"

"Yes, the fascination is great, till the perpetual round of the same amusements becomes 'weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable;' and then we still crowd to them, wasting on them our energies of body and mind, because we have become unfit to enjoy more healthful pleasures."

"And is this your real opinion of London society? Yet it was but a minute ago you were

advocating the expediency of Miss Percival being introduced into it."

"I spoke then as interest leads one to speak; and I should urge the same again if I thought that by doing so, that same weary round would be enlivened by anything so fresh and new as Miss Percival."

"Uttering different opinions according to interest and circumstance," said Louisa—"is that one of the sanctioned freedoms of your fashionable world? If so, you do well to inveigh against it."

"Not uttering different opinions, only modifying them," replied Arthur; "there is little gained in society by hurting the opinions and prejudices of others."

"But still less, I should hope, by showing a false compliance with them."

"I will not presume to argue such a serious question with you; I should undoubtedly make a fool of myself; and, at all events, if I am obliged to confess that London is not *le Palais de la Verité*, believe me, at least, I rejoice to find it here."

"Surely it should be in every human heart," answered Louisa, still gravely, for to her there was no *plaisanterie* upon such a subject.

"Do not judge too severely until you know how ill-suited a place London is for preserving

that temple pure. It is that knowledge," he continued, after a moment's silence, "more than the desire of quiet, more than mere satiety of worn-out pleasures, which sickens one of the world, and makes one long to seek in such scenes as these to regain the guilelessness and the freshness of mind it has destroyed."

Louisa looked up in astonishment, but her momentary displeasure was gone; she forgot that he had a moment before advocated the cause of insincerity, when she heard the tone of mournful regret with which he spoke these last words.

A short silence ensued, and, before they had time to resume their conversation, Minna Montague entered the room, having just returned from her ride.

"Mr. St. John! is it possible?" she exclaimed, as she recognized Louisa's companion. "What can you be doing in Devonshire, when all the world is grouse-shooting in Scotland? I hope you mean to stay for Lady Ethelwode's ball: I suppose Louisa has already told you that she is going to give one?"

"Lady Ethelwode give a ball! Then she must be much changed from what I remember her."

"Oh no! she is as indolent as ever; but mamma managed to persuade her into it, and promised to take all the trouble; and now, if

any thing should happen to prevent it, it would be *désolant!*”

“You will not be kept long in suspense,” said Mr. St. John, “for here come Lady Frances and your sister, just in time, I hope, to save you from any dangerous excess of grief and anxiety.”

Minna ran off to hear the news they had brought in spite of her riding-habit, which rather embarrassed her movements. At the door she nearly tumbled over Sir Charles, who was coming in with his hands full of papers, which she knocked down and scattered in her hurry.

“Ten thousand pardons, my dear uncle! I will come back again in a minute to pick them up;” and on she ran, leaving Sir Charles rather confounded at her rapidity.

He was still more astonished when, on turning round, he saw St. John, who had sprung forward to repair Miss Montague’s awkwardness, and now presented to him the papers he had dropped.

“My dear Arthur,” exclaimed he, “how came you here? Do you drop from the clouds?”

“No, only from the abbey, where I arrived yesterday, and whither I must soon return now I have seen you, or Lord Caldwell will think I am lost, owing to my conceit in not choosing to take a guide.”

“Well, I am glad you waited to see me; I

should have been very sorry to miss you. How is your father? Does he like his colonial appointment?"

"Very much indeed, I believe. When the last Mediterranean packet sailed from Corfu, he was as happy as a man can be with the thermometer at ninety degrees in the shade, and the air black with musquitoes."

"That does not sound very like happiness," said Sir Charles, laughing. "But, my dear boy, will you not stay and dine with us?"

St. John could not stay that day, as Lord Caldwell expected him, and he had no time to lose, as he had promised to be home early. Sir Charles asked him for the next day, and, having accepted the invitation, he took his leave, without waiting for the return of Miss Montague.

The next day Sir Charles went to the abbey to call on Lord Caldwell and St. John, and, as Louisa and Minna were with him, they rode up and down the avenue whilst he was within.

"Why is this place called the abbey?" asked Minna, when the two girls were left together. "I never was here before, and I always concluded it was an old place, from its name."

"It is certainly not very appropriate for this new house," answered Louisa; "but it owes it to that old ruin you see between us and Ethelwode Castle, and which, I believe, Lord Ethel-

wode grudges the possession of to his neighbour more than all the rest of this fine property which once was his."

"What an unaccountable fancy; but I know it is the fashion with a certain set of people to love any thing because it is old — the very reason, to my mind, why such things are little worth having."

"Lord Ethelwode would be not a little shocked to hear it hinted that he followed the opinions or fashions of any set. No; with him it is a much deeper and truer feeling, and I can myself sympathize with him to a great extent. I could not, without reluctance, pull down an old wall, or suffer an old withered tree to be cut down, if they had witnessed the noble deeds, or only the village sports, of other times."

"I care little for village sports, either ancient or modern," said Minna, laughing; "besides, the ruins of a gloomy old convent cannot even conjure up such pleasant recollections as these."

"No; but it has other ones of much higher interest — recollections of the days when these buildings were the only sanctuaries where the spiritual part of man's nature asserted its rightful supremacy over the material. Then, whilst the outer world was sunk in barbarism and ignorance, and brute force held universal sway — when slaves tilled the ground, and women were

little better than slaves, though mocked with a semblance of worship—within the silent walls of many an abbey such as this, men, full of genius, thought, and pondered, and wrote in their narrow cells, and preserved from destruction the learning which was one day to diffuse its light over the earth, and civilize and enfranchise the human race.”

“All very musty together,” yawned Minna, to whom such reflections were uncongenial. “Let us canter on, Loo; my uncle is a long time paying his visit.”

Louisa was so accustomed to sympathy in all her feelings, or at least to find her father ever ready to follow her train of thought, and discuss a subject fully with her, that Minna’s words struck coldly upon her, and she rode on, glad to lose, in the rapid motion, the unpleasant feeling thus excited.

“You are going at a tremendous pace!” cried Arthur St. John, who, a few minutes after, overtook them with Sir Charles Conway and Lord Caldwell. “I hope you had no design of running away from us?”

“We did not know we were pursued,” said Minna, “though I, for one, should have been very glad to find it out. Louisa fell into a rhapsody before that old ruin just now, and I was forced to make her ride on to bring her down

to this terrestrial world again. You cannot imagine what a deal of eloquence she wasted upon me."

"Now where shall we go?" said Sir Charles, after he had introduced Lord Caldwell to Louisa, who had not seen him since she was a child. "To the beach for a canter, or to the hills for a view?"

"Oh, to the beach, by all means!" cried Minna. "I am unworthy of your fine views; I should only provoke Louisa by my indifference; but a canter on a good beach is the pleasantest thing in the world, next to a waltz."

"*Apropos* of the beach," said Lord Caldwell, as they turned their horses' heads in the direction Minna had proposed; "yesterday, as I was riding there, I saw a girl — a young lady I suppose I ought to call her, who struck me as being, without exception, the loveliest creature I had ever beheld. She was sitting on the rocks, sorting some shells that a very handsome boy, apparently her only companion, had just tossed into her lap; and, as she had thrown off her bonnet, I had a full view of her: I could not have conceived any thing in human shape so perfectly beautiful. I would have given any thing to find out who she was, but there was nobody near to ask."

"It must have been Ellen!" exclaimed Louisa

and her father in a breath; "no one but her could answer to such a description."

"And pray who is this wonderful Ellen?"

"Miss Percival, Lady Ethelwode's daughter."

"Lady Ethelwode! is it possible that any thing so bright should have grown up under the shadow of my grim, stately old opponent! I should have thought his very presence enough to congeal any one into stone as grey and gloomy as the towers of his old castle."

"He has certainly not had that effect upon his step-daughter," said Louisa; "she is a being of pure flesh and blood, and the brightest, the sunniest that ever trod the earth."

"She looked just that," said Lord Caldwell. "I am glad she is a friend of yours, for I shall come to you for an introduction whenever I see her again, for you know the castle is forbidden ground to me. Lord Ethelwode has not yet gulped down his indignation at my refusing to sell back the abbey to him after his father's death; and he holds me, moreover, in additional abomination as a man who has won, by his own exertions, the honours which *he* piques himself upon having inherited without any exertion at all."

Lord Caldwell spoke with evident bitterness, and Sir Charles, to whom the subject was disagreeable from the regard he felt for his

old neighbour, changed it as quickly as possible.

When they reached the beach, to Minna's great disappointment, the tide was not low enough, or the sand sufficiently firm to afford good cantering ground. Seeing herself forced into a gentle pace, she would most willingly have engrossed the attention of Mr. St. John, but all her manœuvres proved ineffectual to accomplish her object. His London experience had made him acquainted with a large circle of young ladies, of whom Minna was but the type; and he turned from her to Louisa, whose peculiar turn of thought and expression had at least the charm of novelty to one who was wearied with the frivolous talk which generally usurps the name of conversation in fashionable society. No one could be a more agreeable companion than the fastidious Mr. St. John when he thought it worth while to exert himself, and he and Louisa were quickly engaged in conversation, and rode on together, quite unconscious of Minna's disappointment.

For some time the whole party proceeded very quietly; but, as the wind rose, Louisa's horse, which was very hot and spirited, grew so restless as to require her utmost skill to manage him. They were riding as near the water as possible, to find harder ground, and from time to time, as

some wave, more ambitious than the rest, broke higher upon the shore, the spray dashed upon the horse's legs, to the great disturbance of Louisa's equanimity. He had been fidgetting and chafing for some time, when Minna, heartily tired of hearing Lord Caldwell discuss county politics with her uncle, suddenly started off at a quick canter, and, passing Louisa, just touched her horse's ears with her whip, saying,—

“Come on, Louisa! the sands are hard here!”

This put the finishing stroke to Junius's patience; no sooner did he feel the whip than, shaking his head as if indignant at the insult, he plunged, reared, then plunged again, and finally, in spite of all Louisa's efforts, and St. John's attempts to catch at his bridle, he got the bit into his mouth and started off. Finding she had no longer power to stop him, Louisa directed all her efforts to guide his headlong career. It was fortunate for her thoughtless cousin that she retained sufficient presence of mind to do so, for had she in her turn alarmed Minna's horse by passing him at that speed, the unpractised rider would probably have been thrown. Just between them there was a lane, which turned off from the beach, and, as Minna kept down upon the sands, Louisa managed to turn her horse in the opposite direction; but Junius had now his

head towards home, and the fearful rapidity of his pace only increased.

“St. John, for God’s sake, do not attempt to follow her,” cried her father, “you will only terrify the horse still more. He must be stopped by the park gate; and we will go up this steep path, which is a short cut; and I trust we shall be yet in time. Have the kindness, Lord Caldwell, to follow Miss Montague, and escort her home.”

So saying, Sir Charles dashed at full speed up the rocky path he had mentioned, followed by St. John, and, as he had foreseen, they reached the lane leading to the park gate just as Louisa was borne rapidly towards it. Sir Charles stuck his spurs into his horse, and made a desperate effort to intercept her, but it was in vain; Junius, enraged at finding an obstacle in his path, became more unmanageable than ever, and, turning suddenly round, bounded over the fence into the park, where Sir Charles soon lost sight of horse and rider. With compressed lips and countenance pale as ashes, he entered the park, and, now that the thick turf deadened the sound of his horse’s feet, urged him at full speed in the direction Junius had taken, whilst he strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of his child. The road was visible in several places in its winding approach to the house, but she was not to be

seen there ; and he hoped that she had succeeded in turning her horse's course once more, for there was a bridge across the stream which divided the park, and should the gate which closed it also be shut—the wretched father trembled to think of the consequences.

“ I see her ! ” cried Arthur, after a few minutes more of dreadful suspense. “ I see her, she is safe, and leading her horse ! ”

“ Thank God ! But stop, we must approach slowly, or we shall startle him again. ”

They checked their speed, and approached Louisa so gently, that, without alarming him further, St. John was able to relieve her from the charge of Junius, whilst her father clasped her in his arms.

“ Thank God ! ” he said again in scarce audible accents, while a tear fell on his daughter's cheek.

“ How did you manage to stop him ? ” said St. John ; “ we were trembling lest he should have made straight for the bridge. ”

“ I made one strong effort, though I confess almost a hopeless one, and succeeded in directing him towards this sandy knoll, where, as I had hoped, the deep ground and this brushwood impeded his course, and he gave up. ”

“ But were you thrown at last ? ”

“ No, it was a sudden impulse, and rather a foolish one, which made me jump off the moment

he stopped. I did not think much about what I was doing."

Sir Charles begged St. John to ride to the house, and order the carriage to take Louisa home; but she stopped him. She was neither tired nor frightened, she said, and she had rather ride home than run the risk of alarming her aunt, on Minna's account, by sending Mr. St. John. Junius had tired himself out now, and would go home quietly enough.

Upon her repeated assurance and entreaty, Sir Charles allowed her to mount again, and they soon reached the house in perfect safety. Lord Caldwell and Minna joined them shortly afterwards, and, whilst the thoughtless cause of all this alarm was pouring out a torrent of questions and excuses, the two gentlemen took their leave.

"By Heaven! that is the strangest girl I ever met with!" exclaimed St. John, as they rode away from the door.

"She seems to me a *franche étourdie*, and nothing more," said Lord Caldwell, somewhat amazed at his companion's warmth.

"You mean Miss Montague, I suppose," replied St. John; "*she* is common-place enough. I am speaking of her cousin. Just now, when I put her on her horse again, after the fearful excitement of the danger she had run, she sprang

as lightly into the saddle, and took the rein with as firm a hand, as if nothing had happened."

"Rather too masculine a display of courage for my taste," said Lord Caldwell; "I hate immoveable women with nerves of iron."

"There was no display about it; in fact, it is a characteristic of her manner, that it always impresses one as being the natural effect of the feeling of the moment; it is the same with her conversation; there is a truthfulness and simplicity about it which would strike one, even if united to far less intellect."

"My dear St. John, you seem to have made rapid progress in the knowledge of Miss Conway's character," said Lord Caldwell, laughing.

"Yes, as one devours the book which presents some new thoughts, or even old ones, dressed in fresh garb, after the mind has been nauseated and wearied with the meaningless trash which is the staple literature of the day."

Lord Caldwell said with a smile, that St. John seemed to have taken a very sudden fit of disgust to the common aspect of the world, and that he supposed it was this which disposed him to admire novelties of any kind.

"Perhaps so," said St. John, laughing, "and therefore I admire Miss Conway; for I repeat again, she is very unlike any other young lady I ever met with. She is certainly far from hand-

some, yet there is a strange power in those dark eyes of hers, and I have been obliged to remember her want of beauty, not to think her beautiful. Then, with all her abruptness of manner, which sometimes almost amounts to *brusquerie*, there is a great dignity about her, which I never saw in so young a person before, and which just saves her as she is on the verge of becoming less feminine."

"All of which may be summed up in one French word," said Lord Caldwell, "*i. e.* she is very *bizarre*, which I think detestable in a woman. So, as we are not likely to agree on this subject, let us gallop home to dinner. The recollection of all Miss Conway's perfections or imperfections would not console me (or you either, I imagine) for that being spoilt by waiting."

CHAPTER VII.

“He had been a coxcomb—but that he had too much talent;—and a great man, but that he had too much vanity.”

“A wound given by a word is oftentimes more difficult to cure, than a wound given by a sword.”—*Sir Philip Sydney.*

Whether Arthur St. John found the Abbey a dull residence, or whether his curiosity was piqued, and his interest excited, by the originality of mind and character displayed by Miss Conway, it is not easy, at this period of our tale, to ascertain; but certain it is, that every day he made his appearance at Oaklands, or joined the party there in their rides and walks. He was always welcomed by Sir Charles and his daughter.

The latter was surprised, and pleased, to find so intellectual a companion in one whom she had, at first, concluded to be a mere man of the world, engrossed with the fashionable frivolities of London society; and her father was glad of having an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with his future heir, in whose hands must some day rest the accomplishment, or the overthrow, of all his cherished plans for the im-

provement of the tenantry on his large estate. It was a matter of no small anxiety to him, to anticipate the probable fate of those who now depended upon him, when he should cease to watch over them, and be obliged to yield the sacred charge to another.

St. John had given little or no attention to such subjects; and as he had, therefore, few fixed opinions with regard to them, he listened to Sir Charles without opposition. The two gentlemen rode over the different farms, and visited the tenants, and St. John entered with apparent zeal into all Sir Charles's views for the improvement of the estate, and the enlightenment of the people.

Louisa was almost always their companion on these occasions. From constant association in all her father's pursuits, she had learnt to feel an interest in these subjects, as great as his own. Her mind had been strengthened and developed by perpetual intercourse with his, and the severer study, and freer discussion, to which he had trained her, had given her the power of thought, the logical clearness of language, which are generally supposed attainable only by men. Accustomed to converse on every subject with him, she joined naturally, and without a thought of pretension, in his conversations with St. John; and the surprise of the latter, at what he had at

first considered the singularity of her character, gradually changed into admiration, as each day her richly stored mind revealed itself more fully to him.

Her aunt and cousins were astonished, too ; but theirs was not the surprise of admiration. There was no end to Lady Frances's insinuations of the horror all elder sons entertained of learned ladies ; nor of her ominous prophecies, that no man of fortune would ever marry a woman likely to be so much cleverer than himself ; nor of Minna's sarcasms about blue-stockings ; nor of Fanny's serious dread of any thing so unfashionable—so unlike what every body else did.

All this Louisa bore very philosophically, and she continued to take her part in the gentlemen's conversation, with as much spirit and interest as if the fear of being pointed out to the finger of fashionable scorn, as a *blue*, had not been before her eyes.

One day, however, as she was just returned from a long ride with her father and St. John, during which the latter had been listening, with evident interest, to her clear, large-minded views upon the different subjects on which they had conversed, Minna exclaimed,

“ Well, Louisa, I believe your plan is a good one, after all !”

“ What plan ? What do you mean ?”

“How admirably unconscious you look! I mean your method of catching Mr. St. John. It was a very bold one to adopt, certainly, and would have frightened most men off at once. But it has answered wonderfully with him; and I think you will succeed in remaining mistress of Oaklands, after all.”

Louisa stood speechless with surprise. She, who had never conceived a thought of artifice, who would have considered herself polluted by one act or word not dictated by perfect sincerity—who could easier have submitted to have a limb cut off, than condescend to sue for the admiration of any man living—she was accused of a mean, cold-hearted design to entrap Mr. St. John, with a view to his future position, as the heir of her father's property. If a look had the power to strike, or if a being like Minna had been capable of feeling the force of its eloquent indignation, Louisa's glance must have made her fall at her feet, and humble herself in shame, before the pure being she had insulted. Some shame she did apparently feel, for the colour mounted to her face, and she began a kind of apology,—but Louisa did not wait to hear it; there was a choking sensation at her throat, and she hastily left the room, that Minna might not see that she had power to wring tears from her.

Lady Frances, who had been present during this scene, followed her to her room.

“My dear Louisa,” said she, “I have been scolding Minna for vexing you; and, indeed, I am dreadfully vexed myself. I have known so many marriages fail, owing to such thoughtless speeches. Nay, my dear, let me speak. I know exactly what you would say—all young ladies say the same thing on these occasions; but you know, as your poor mother’s sister, I must feel such an interest in you, that you may speak openly to me. Now, do not interrupt me, my dear child; of course it will be delightful to me to think that you will not be turned out of Oaklands, after all. No one knows how that has weighed on my heart for years, and your marriage with Mr. St. John——”

“There is no marriage in the case!” exclaimed Louisa, making an effort to speak calmly. “I do not know what you and Minna mean. My words and actions are always open; and rather than degrade myself to such artifice, such unwomanly meanness, as Minna spoke of, I would forfeit lands to which Oaklands should be as a paddock. Pray, let this subject never be mentioned between us again.” These last words were uttered in a tone which made even Lady Frances feel that it was impossible to resume the conversation, and she left the room, inwardly

commenting on Louisa's absurdity, in taking such affront at being charged with doing what almost every girl in London did as a part of her business in life.

"I wonder how she supposes she is to get married," was her final reflection, "if she is too proud to take any trouble to attract admirers. If she thinks they will fall at her feet, without her condescending to make any exertion on her part, she will find herself very much mistaken."

The next time Mr. St. John called at Oaklands, Louisa could not help feeling glad that her aunt and cousins were not present. In spite of all her determinations not to let their words have any influence over her, they instantly recurred to her mind when he was announced, and she received him with a heightened colour, and an embarrassed manner, very unlike her usual quiet self-possession.

"I am sorry to say that this is a farewell visit," said he, after a few minutes' conversation. "I return to town to-morrow."

"This is a very sudden determination, is it not?" said Sir Charles; "yesterday you did not seem to contemplate leaving the abbey so soon."

"No; nor am I *leaving* it now; I am fairly turned out, *bongré, malgré*. Lord Caldwell has received despatches, recalling him to town, and,

as he takes his cook with him, I have nothing for it but to go, or starve."

"Oh, if that is all, I think we can manage to save you from such a distressing alternative. Come and finish your visit here; you will be a mile nearer the trout stream, and I shall escape Lady Ethelwode's wrath, which would infallibly have fallen upon me, if I had let a dancing man go out of the country just before her ball."

"I shall be delighted to accept your invitation," said St. John, casting a glance at Louisa, who bent in unwonted silence over her drawing. "I never felt less inclined to leave a place in my life, and have been pitying myself all the morning for a very ill-used individual."

"Then when shall we expect you? to-night or to-morrow morning?"

"To-night, if it be the same to you, for Lord Caldwell is in such a violent hurry to be off, that, I believe, but for my determined deafness to all hints to that effect, we should have been on the road to town by this time. I must go now and tell him of my altered plans, and give orders for my things to be brought here. I shall be delighted to change their destination."

Again he looked at Louisa, and this time her eye met his, and he fancied he saw a momentary blush on her cheek. He had no time to ascertain the fact, however, for she rose and left the

room, saying that she was going to give orders about his apartment.

In a few hours he found himself installed at Oaklands, and he took possession of his room with a feeling of pleasure, which he could scarcely have accounted for to himself. It is rare for a clever man — and such was Arthur St. John — to be a coxcomb, but he had, to say the least, no mean opinion of himself, and his retrospection of the day's events did not tend to lower it. To have excited enough interest in such a woman as Louisa, as to cause the embarrassment and discomposure which had been evident in her manner that morning, he felt to be of itself no mean triumph. Whether he had any deeper feeling at stake or not, the mere power of moving her thus was delightful. It would be something worth achieving to make that proud eye sink in confusion beneath his, to see that strong and noble nature yielding to his influence; and, without a thought beyond the pleasure of such a triumph, he determined to leave no effort untried to obtain it.

Thus already were Minna's careless words working their evil effects. Owing to them, her single-minded cousin had made a false impression on St. John, and created hopes which his vanity was stimulated to realize, before his heart had any interest in the result. Men have cried

out against the severity of the sentence, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;" yet, could we calculate the amount of evil and misery produced by idle words spoken in jest, perhaps in thoughtless sarcasm, in momentary irritation, and forgotten as soon as the lips have uttered them, we should feel that few sins deserve a heavier retribution. In that day when "the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed," the careless speaker will stand aghast at the fearful sight of the festering wounds, sore rankling for years, the minds defiled and embittered, the bad passions roused into activity, the train of evil consequences, trial, suffering, sin, operating, perhaps, throughout a whole life, which have resulted from his idle words!

When St. John met Louisa at dinner, he saw at once that his plans of conquest would be quite as difficult of achievement as the most ardent lover of glory could desire, and that he was yet far from having gained as much ground as he had imagined. It is true that Minna's meaning smile, as he took his place by her side, called up the indignant blood to her cheek, but the embarrassment of the morning was gone; her eye met his with its usual open expression, and her manner had regained its quiet dignity, though he felt that it was somewhat colder, and more

reserved than it had been. There was something in this very reserve which piqued his curiosity, and the additional difficulties it seemed to throw in his way only stimulated him to a more eager pursuit of his object. His residence in the same house afforded him abundant opportunities, and he exerted so successfully his great powers of conversation, and adapted himself with such admirable appearance of sincerity to the tone of thought and feeling of Sir Charles and his daughter, that Louisa soon forgot, in her admiration of his talents, and in the charm of his society, the reserve which her cousin's words had temporarily thrown over her manner.

Days passed on, uneventful enough as to external things; but when are the days which are not rich in revelations of mind to mind in conversation, in passing glimpses of character and temper, in discoveries of the secret tastes and pursuits which show the direction of the mind, to those who live together in free and intellectual companionship? In such companionship, and by such means, Louisa's character daily unfolded itself to St. John; and *blasé* as he was to the pleasures of the world, and sickened of the artificial characterless beings he was used to associate with, there was a kind of fascination to him in her originality of thought, her freshness and purity of mind.

As they rode and walked together day after day, he forgot his selfish designs in the engrossing interest of her conversation, in his daily increasing pleasure in her society, and he even learned to fancy her almost beautiful, as he watched her eloquent countenance, lighting up with sudden brilliancy, as some passing thought or word gave her pleasure, and her calm manner, warming into grace and animation, in the excitement of conversation. Plain as her features certainly were, it had been once said of her that "the beauty must be very striking indeed, which could even attract a glance when she was present;" and this was true. Hers was the beauty of mind, shining in an open countenance, and St. John unconsciously yielded daily more and more to its power.

"I wonder what can have become of Ellen Percival," said Sir Charles, one morning when the whole party were assembled at luncheon. "I do not think she was ever so long without coming here before."

"She must do it on purpose to spite me," said St. John, in a tone of ludicrous annoyance; "I think I have been infamously used, in having been three weeks in the neighbourhood, without once seeing its greatest prodigy."

"I am afraid you have no chance of seeing her till the ball," said Louisa. "She is at pre-

sent overwhelmed with business. Lady Ethelwode, of course, takes no part in any thing so fatiguing as the preparations for such an affair, and Ellen will not trust any thing to Mademoiselle Juliani's taste, so that it all falls upon her. I have just had a note from her, begging me to go and help her with my advice."

"But I hope you are not going, instead of riding?"

"Indeed I am, and Junius must be content to remain in the stable to-day."

St. John eagerly offered her his escort for the walk, but Louisa thanked him, saying she would not deprive him of his ride, and the distance was nothing to a practised walker like herself.

St. John bit his lip, and turned away. Louisa's manner so plainly shewed that she said what she meant, that he felt it was useless to press her.

"I had thought of asking *you* to come with me, Minna," continued she. "Your greater experience in ball-rooms will make you a much more useful addition to Ellen's council of taste than I can be."

"With all my heart," said Minna, jumping up; and in a few minutes the two girls were on their way to the castle.

"It was very prudent of you not to let Mr. St. John come with you," said Minna. "Ellen

would be a dangerous rival. He must see her at the ball, however ; I do not see how you can prevent that. Now, my dear Louisa, pray don't look as if you meant to beat me."

Louisa felt much more inclined to beat herself for having chosen such a companion. She walked on in silence, for she felt that she could not just then speak as calmly as she wished.

"Really, Louisa," continued her tormentor, "you should learn to bear a joke more good-humouredly."

"Really, Minna, you should learn not to make one which you know will insult another person's feelings."

"Then you do allow," cried her cousin, triumphantly, "that there are feelings in the case?"

"I allow (what you might already have perceived) that my feelings of truth, of womanly pride, are insulted by your imputations of the mean artifice to compass the most unworthy object."

"Poor Mr. St. John ! If he could but hear that, his vanity must hide its diminished head for ever after."

"I am not speaking of Mr. St. John, as you very well know, but of the design you impute to me ; the design of. . . . No, it is too degrading, I cannot utter it." And Louisa walked on at a rapid pace.

"My dear Louisa," said Minna, breathlessly, after a few minutes' silence, "if you have worked off your indignation, I should really be much obliged to you to walk a little slower. Pray do not carry your revenge so far as to make me drop with the heat and fatigue of running after you any longer."

Louisa slackened her pace, saying, with a smile, that she was not aware how fast she was going; and they proceeded to the castle without anything further happening to ruffle the composure a strong effort had enabled her to recover.

Ellen welcomed them warmly; and all three were soon busily engaged in consulting, admiring, approving, and disapproving the unfinished arrangements. The afternoon quickly slipped away; and as Louisa and Minna prepared to return home, the former pressed Ellen to come back with them to dine at Oaklands. Ellen could not come, however; she was too much wanted at home; and Louisa saw, by the glow of her radiant countenance, that she was happier in feeling that she *was* wanted, that her presence was necessary, than she would have been in the enjoyment of the pleasantest society. She ceased urging her, therefore, and she and Minna proceeded on their way homewards.

"Let us take the lane by the trout stream,"

said Louisa; "it will be cooler than crossing the park."

Minna had no objection, and they entered the lane. They had not proceeded far before they perceived Mr. St. John at a little distance, apparently deeply engaged in fishing. Minna cast a malicious glance at her cousin, but Louisa was looking in another direction; and whether the glow on her cheek was caused by any inward emotion, or merely by the warmth of exercise, Minna was unable to decide to her satisfaction. At all events, by the time they reached the spot where Mr. St. John was sitting, her voice and manner were as calm as usual.

"I thought you were going to ride with my father and Fanny," said she. "How did you happen to change your mind?"

"I hope you do not grudge me that feminine privilege, Miss Conway. The reason of my exercising it in this instance was, that Sir Charles was called away on business; and, knowing how nervous Lady Frances is, I would not incur the responsibility of riding alone with Miss Fanny; so I saved myself the possible mortification of seeing my escort refused a second time to-day, and came here to solace myself for all my disappointments."

"You have certainly been very unfortunate to-day," said Minna, ironically; "but I am

afraid we shall not feel for you as we ought, if your misfortunes procure us a good dish of fish for dinner."

"We shall prevent the possibility of that," said Louisa, "if we stand talking here, frightening away all the trout. So we had better go on, Minna, and leave Mr. St. John to his sport."

But St. John had had enough fishing for that day. He took up his empty basket, which testified, as Minna said, either to his want of skill or his want of zeal in the sport, and prepared to accompany the young ladies. This time his escort could not be refused, so he walked on by Louisa's side; but she was unusually silent, and her countenance showed no signs of pleasure.

"I can make nothing of my dignified cousin," said Minna, as she entered her mother's dressing-room on her return from her walk. "She is offended with me, I believe, for noticing her flirtation with Mr. St. John; and, whenever I approach the subject, she puts on the airs of a princess. But the strangest thing of all, is the conceit that lies under all that apparent simplicity. She was quite affronted with me for hinting that Ellen Percival would be a dangerous rival; and asked her to dinner immediately, as if to show how little she feared her: and just now, when we met Mr. St. John, she treated him

with as much *hauteur* as if he had been already her sworn vassal."

"You must be more indulgent to your cousin, my dear Minna," answered Lady Frances, in her sweetest tone. "You must make allowance for her perfect ignorance of the world, and for her having been so spoiled by her father's foolish management. It is not everybody who has a devoted mother to watch over them and sacrifice every thing for their advantage, as you have had, my dears. I could have done a great deal for Louisa too, if Sir Charles had not been so obstinate about her; and I half suspect he repents it now that he sees he has made her more of a man than a woman. Now, if he had been reasonable, Mademoiselle Juliani might have been Louisa's governess, and she would, perhaps, have sung as well as Ellen Percival. I did engage Juliani for her, you know, and took an immense deal of trouble about it, as she was such a treasure; but when I told Sir Charles I had done so, and that she would only consent to come from the hopes of sea-air benefiting her voice, he actually took a lodging for her in the village, and said he hoped the sea-air would do her all the more good for having no lessons to give. After this, what can one expect?"

Minna burst out laughing.

"Ah! it is very well for you to laugh; but,

I assure you, my heart aches when I think of what my poor dear sister would have said. And then, when she comes out in London, it will make me miserable to see her making herself conspicuous, and bringing ridicule upon us all."

"I do not think any one could think Louisa ridiculous," said Fanny. "With all her oddity, she does the honours of the house with a knowledge of "*les usages du monde*" quite extraordinary, and she is never embarrassed or awkward."

"That is to say, she receives her guests with the dignity of a *comtesse de comedie* of the *suite de Louis XIV.*," said Minna, "so absurd in a girl of her age; and then, with all her horror of affectation, I cannot help thinking that there is a good deal of it in that excessive sincerity, and in her delight in those prosy conversations between her father and Mr. St. John, who, by the way, is bored to death by them, I am sure, though he goes through them with such exemplary patience. However, she manages Sir Charles, and will marry his heir; so she plays her cards very well, notwithstanding her simplicity and ignorance of the world."

The object of this conversation was, meanwhile, sitting quietly with her father in the library. She had sought him, as she generally did when any thing had grieved or ruffled her;

and in his genial, affectionate companionship, she had almost forgotten the annoyance of the morning.

"How long it is since I have had such a pleasant *tête-à-tête* with you, dearest father!" said she, as she rose to go and dress for dinner. "I do not know how it is, but I seldom see you now."

"Society has stronger claims upon you now, my child, than in former days, when we had nothing to do but to keep one another company. But I should be sorry to think that our old pursuits were given up, or that we should not be as happy together in our quiet corner, when we are left to ourselves again."

"I wish that time were come!" said Louisa, with a sigh. "I am sure, even from my short experience, that neither my mind nor my temper could bear a life of idleness or constant society."

"My dear child, beware how you allow any circumstances to exercise an undue influence on your mind and temper. The temper which is schooled to Christian charity and humility, the mind which is habitually trained to lofty aims, ought not to be so strongly affected by the varying hues of our external condition. It was a weak philosophy that taught that man is the creature of circumstances. Man may rise above circumstances, in the strength of his principles and of his faith, and use them rather as the tools

wherewith to work out the high purposes of his existence."

"Yet the influence of circumstances has been powerful even on great minds."

"Yes, on minds that needed the *discipline* of circumstances. They were appointed as the refiner's fire, to purify the precious ore from the dross that adulterated it. Therefore it is that we should welcome every change of circumstances as an ordeal, whence we may work out a higher faith, a clearer knowledge of the truth. May your's, if such be appointed you, be a mild one, my child!—but no; I am wrong—may you have strength to endure and improve it, whatever it may be!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

"One shade the more, one ray the less
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face,
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how clear their dwelling-place."

BYRON.

The day of the ball was now rapidly approaching, and Ethelwode Castle, usually so quiet, was in a state of extraordinary bustle and commotion. Such running to and fro of the whole *corps domestique*, male and female—such activity in the housekeeper's room and kitchen—such a rubbing up of old oak floors and furniture—such hammering and carpentering, had not been heard there since the christening of the young heir. The old grey towers seemed to look down in grave astonishment at the unwonted turmoil be-

low. But Lord Ethelwode, having determined that a ball should be given at the castle, had determined, also, that nothing should be wanting to make it the most splendid thing of the kind which had ever been seen in the county.

A London upholsterer was engaged to superintend the decoration of the apartments; Weipert's band had been secured at an immense cost; and Gunter had been ordered to despatch a host of *cordons bleus* to prepare the costly supper.

Nothing that money could procure should be left undone to grace the *fête* given (as Lord Ethelwode believed) in honour of the heir of his ancient house; and, from the moment the invitations were issued, nothing was talked of for twenty miles round but the splendour of the approaching festivity at Ethelwode Castle.

Lady Frances had succeeded even beyond her expectations. But her satisfaction was not wholly unmingled; she could not help being a little disappointed at having the management taken out of her hands; she had enjoyed the thoughts of her importance as directress of the whole thing—it would have been such a fine field for the exercise of her active managing propensities—and now she found that she was to be nothing but a guest, like any one else. It really was rather a trial; and even Louisa, unsuspecting as she always was of any thing like hum

bug, could not be quite satisfied that her aunt was sincere in her extraordinarily vehement professions that she was delighted to have nothing to do with it, and that it was really a great relief to have so much responsibility taken off her hands.

To Ellen this ball was a source of greater pleasure, perhaps, than to any one else—even the most dancing-loving young lady in the county. It was so new to her to have something really to do, to think of, to look forward to—something that did not exist only in her world of dreams. It was her taste which corrected and guided that of the upholsterer, and her hands that wove the garlands which were to deck the lofty saloons. Her sweet, rich voice, might be heard almost all day in snatches of joyous song, as she stood amongst the heaps of flowers which had been brought in for the purpose, more like a Grecian poet's conception of the goddess Flora, than any thing belonging to this working-day world.

Lady Ethelwode declared that Ellen was getting almost as noisy again as she used to be in childhood; and young Egbert, who seemed in his element in all the bustle, vowed that he had never thought his sister could be so useful and pleasant a companion before. She even contrived to please her cold, harsh, father-in-law, by bring-

ing out, from their obscure abode in one of the towers, certain old banners, which the barons of Ethelwode had used to have borne before them to battle; and with them, and some pieces of old armour, drawn from the same receptacle, to arrange a splendid trophy, beneath which, a transparency, surrounded with laurels, exhibited the initials of the young heir.

“Really, Ellen, you have done this admirably!” said Lord Ethelwode, as he crossed the gallery. “The armour is uncommonly well arranged; and all of the same epoch, I see—the reign of Henry II., when my ancestor, Sir Egbert Ethelwode, was created a baron. I give you great credit for the taste and skill you have shewn in this.”

Ellen’s heart danced more lightly than before, as she listened to these, almost the first words of kindness and approbation she had ever heard from him; and she bounded up stairs to dress, with the feeling, that this was the happiest day of her life! Her happiness was certainly not decreased by the sight of the beautiful white crape dress, her first ball-dress, which had been sent for from London, for the occasion.

There was a wreath of the most delicate artificial flowers, too; but these Ellen positively refused to wear. She had herself gathered some of the richest blossoms of her favourite geraniums, and had twined them into a wreath; and

none but these would she allow to be placed in her hair, notwithstanding all Mademoiselle Juliani's remonstrances. And when they were placed, and when she stood arrayed for the evening's festivity, even Mademoiselle Juliani thought that no blossom there could equal, in freshness and loveliness, the being who wore them.

Yes ; beautiful she was indeed, far beyond the common beauty of women—the features were cast in the most perfect classic mould, the oval contour, the straight and delicate nose, the open, yet not high forehead, from whence was parted back the dark, glossy hair, the rounded cheek, the small, and well-shaped head, placed, with such perfect grace, on the slender throat, which betokened her patrician descent, might well have been deemed an incarnation of that lovely ideal, which inspired the sculptors and poets of ancient Greece.

Her skin had the texture and the transparency of a white rose-leaf ; and only on her cheek did it change its hue to that of the glowing damask. Her eyes—but who shall tell of the magic beauty of those deep blue eyes, which, when she lifted their long, dark fringe of eyelashes, looked things, which the philosophy of no man, who met their glance, had ever dreamed of, in heaven or earth ; and then, her smile seemed to illuminate her whole countenance as a visible light ; and even

the beauty of her rich red lips was forgotten, when the clear, liquid tones of her voice fell on the ear. Verily, the singing of any other woman was not so full of music as the simplest words spoken by Ellen.

Her figure accorded well with the dream-like loveliness of her face, in the perfect symmetry and proportion of the rounded limbs ; and there was an undefinable and exquisite grace in every motion, that gave to her beauty a character of fascination. Truly, to look on her, as she moved in her loveliness, she seemed a thing too bright and delicate for this coarse earth, and belonging, rather, to another, and purer sphere.

When she went down to the drawing-room, she found the Allens already arrived, and her mother fretfully complaining that she was left to endure all the fatigue of receiving the guests.

"You will excuse my rising, I am sure, Mrs. Allen—I am so tired, so overpowered. You cannot conceive what the fatigue of this day has been to me. I think I have opened and read at least a hundred notes ; I was obliged, at last, to desire that no more should be brought to me."

"We are come very early," said Mrs. Allen ; "but we wished to introduce to you our grandson, Edward Annesley, whom you may remember as a boy. He has come back to settle at

Ethelwode, as his grandfather's curate, till he can get a living of his own."

"Oh! Mr. Annesley, I am delighted to see you! I have been a sad invalid since we met. Ellen will be down in a moment, and will, I am sure, be glad to welcome her old playfellow. Indeed I cannot conceive why she is not here already; there will be more people coming, and she will not be ready to receive them. Mademoiselle Juliani, do go and look after her; and tell Sindon to let Lord Ethelwode know that Mr. Allen is here."

Ellen, however, made her appearance before Mademoiselle Juliani could depart on her errand, and the words of displeasure died away on Lady Ethelwode's lips, as her eyes fell on that radiant form. For a moment the mother's pride overcame her indolence. She rose from her sofa, and, drawing Ellen towards her, she imprinted a kiss on her forehead, saying, at the same time, to Mrs. Allen, "Is she not lovely?"

But Mrs. Allen's assenting look of admiration, and Mademoiselle Juliani's rapturous exclamations, were alike lost on Ellen. She heard only her mother's kind tone, she felt only her mother's fond kiss—the only tokens of real affection she had received from her for years. Her first impulse was to fall on her mother's neck, and weep; but she remembered Lady Ethelwode's horror of

a *scene*; and Lord Ethelwode's entrance still more effectually recalled her to herself. She brushed away the falling tear, and turned to speak to Mrs. Allen.

"But where is Edward — Mr. Annesley, I mean?" asked she. "I thought he was to arrive yesterday."

Edward now came forward. He was glad she had not noticed him at first, for he had had time to recover the breathless surprise into which her appearance had thrown him. It was several years since he had seen her, and, though prepared to expect beauty, such faultless, almost unearthly loveliness, he had never even dreamed of; and he gazed on her in speechless admiration. He had seen, too, the change of her countenance, the emotion called up by her mother's words; and that slight incident had already revealed to him much of her inward history. His admiration was, therefore, mingled with a feeling of compassion, akin to that which he had formerly experienced for the wayward and lonely child, as he advanced to receive her greeting, and to press the proffered hand in his own.

"I am very glad to see you back again in our neighbourhood," said Ellen. "I assure you I have often missed my kind, patient tutor; your long absence has been very fatal to the progress of my education."

"I am afraid my instructions did not greatly promote it," said Edward, smiling. "I think we were much more given to wander about the woods than to keep steadily to our book. But you must have forgotten things which happened so long ago."

"Indeed I have not," said Ellen, eagerly; "I remember every thing, even to my naughtiness and your forbearance with me. I have not so many friends that I should forget my first and kindest one. What happy days those were! Do you remember . . ."

But Ellen's recollections were checked in full career by the entrance of more guests, whom she was obliged to go and receive, and she could not again speak to Edward for a long time. Carriage after carriage drove up to the door, and an incessant stream of people began to pour into the saloon. Lord Ethelwode stood beside her to receive his guests. He was in his highest mood of gratified pride, and could afford to be graciously condescending to all—even the untitled and *nouveaux riches* amongst his guests. He had tried to persuade young Egbert to remain beside him, that he might have the satisfaction of presenting his heir to those whose families were sufficiently ancient, or their grandfathers sufficiently authenticated, to entitle them to such an honour. But Egbert had no idea of

submitting to such restraint, and, escaping from his father's hand, he ran off to watch the arrival of the carriages, and amuse himself by peeping through the keyhole of the cloak-room to discover the proceedings of the ladies within.

Ellen's rather fatiguing task as her mother's representative was lightened by the amusement she felt in watching the nice adjustment of her step-father's civilities, according to the scale of hereditary descent—how gracefully courteous he was to the duke of fifty generations, with what easy familiarity he greeted the ancient baronet, with what affable politeness he returned the salutations of the squire whose family had held the same estate for centuries, and how he condescendingly nodded to the common herd, whose ancestors were, at least, problematical, if not completely shrouded in obscurity! In the case of the Oaklands' party, however, it required some nicety of judgment to settle which of these various modes were to be adopted.

Sir Charles, as being a baronet of the first creation, and an old friend besides, was certainly entitled to all possible courtesy, and Lady Frances's pedigree was unexceptionable; but then she had married a man whose father had made his fortune in the city, and invented his own armorial bearings. This was a serious stain, and the daughters of such a *mésalliance* could not

claim the privileges of unsullied descent. Towards them, therefore, it was necessary to maintain a somewhat dignified demeanour. Mr. St. John he received graciously. He came of the same old stock as the Conways, and, besides, his mother was a daughter of Lord Colville, who stood next to himself in the peerage. The "*sangre azul*," or blue blood, as the Spaniards call the blood unsullied by *mésalliance*, was, in his case, perfectly pure. Lord Ethelwode could shake him by the hand without feeling that he demeaned himself in any way by so doing.

Before the party passed on, however, he was won over almost to a forgetfulness of Lady Frances's terrible matrimonial *faux-pas* by her enthusiastic admiration of every thing she saw, and more especially of the noble boy, whose birthday had served as a pretext for the *fête*. Even the half-caste daughters rose in his estimation, as Minna declared that she had never seen so handsome a boy, and laughingly regretted that he was too young as yet to be made a conquest of; whilst Fanny gravely assured him that Ethelwode Castle resembled one of the fairy palaces of the old romances, and that she thought he must have had some genii at command to create such a scene of enchantment.

"Thank Heaven, we are moving on at last!" said Mr. St. John to Louisa. "I thought the

flow of compliments never would cease, or, at least, not till we had been crushed to death by the crowd at the door. Now that we can move and breathe freely, do tell me who is that beautiful girl in white standing near Lord Ethelwode — that celestial houri, as your poetical cousin would call her?"

"That is Miss Percival; I am glad you do not think I exaggerated her beauty."

"Exaggerated! no; how could it be possible to exaggerate that which is so entirely beyond description?" replied Arthur, still gazing on Ellen. "Lady Ethelwode has done well in keeping her quiet here till now; when she does come out, all London will go mad about her. But, as she is a friend of yours, Miss Conway, I hope you will introduce me."

"Why really I am half afraid," said Louisa; "you seem so disposed to set the example of madness to your London world, I scarcely think it would be safe."

"Oh, you need not be alarmed, though certainly that face would be a reasonable excuse for any degree of insanity. But it requires," added he, in a lower tone and with a look which called up the colour to Louisa's cheek, "more than a beautiful face to merge *my* sober reason into love."

The opening in the crowd now enabled Louisa

easily to approach Ellen; and the introduction was accordingly performed, and Ellen's hand claimed by St. John for the first waltz. Louisa did not waltz, and she sat down in one of the recessed windows, and amused herself with watching the animated scene before her. The spacious apartment, though well filled, was not so crowded but that she could easily trace through the mazes of the dance the couple in which she was most interested.

At first she felt nothing but pleasure in watching Ellen's fairy-like grace of motion, so well contrasted with the manly bearing of her handsome partner, and listening to the general murmur of admiration which followed their steps. She could not help thinking, however, that for one who had declared himself proof against the fascination of mere beauty, Mr. St. John hung over Ellen with a most lover-like devotion, and that the whispered words which brought up so vivid a glow to her cheek must have some deeper import than the common-place nothings of ball-room conversation.

"It signifies nothing to me, however," said Louisa to herself.

It signified nothing to her either, she again repeated, when the waltz was over, and she saw Arthur, instead of returning to her, as she had unconsciously expected, walk down the long

suite of apartments with his fair partner still hanging on his arm. But every body did the same, thought she, why should not Mr. St. John? She would watch them no longer, and was glad when somebody came up to ask her to dance, and thus forced her to direct her attention to something else.

She could not help seeing, however, that St. John was again Ellen's partner, and afterwards, though he could not prevent her dancing with other people, yet, at the end of each dance, he stood by her chair, and seemed to have neither eyes nor ears for any one else. Louisa was angry with herself for feeling hurt by his inattention. If he chose to forget the rules of good breeding, it was for him, not her, to be vexed, and she would think of it no more. Yet all her pride could not preserve her from an unaccountable feeling of uneasiness, when he led Ellen out to waltz a second time.

At that moment she caught a glimpse of Edward Annesley, who was leaning against the fireplace, his eyes fixed on Ellen; and she fancied that his countenance expressed the same feeling. Whilst she was pondering somewhat deeply upon this circumstance, some one touched her arm, and she heard a well-known voice pronounce her name. She looked up, and started on seeing Reginald Talbot standing beside her.

All her unpleasant thoughts were dispelled in a moment.

"You here, Reginald! Is it possible? When did you arrive? Where have you come from? How did you come?"

"I arrived at Oaklands about an hour ago," said Reginald; "and, to my great discomposure, found you all out. The servants told me you were here; so, presuming on my old acquaintance with Lord and Lady Ethelwode, I dispensed with an invitation, changed my dress, and came over to seek you."

"Most wisely done, M. le Secretaire," said Louisa; "it would have been provoking to find, on our return home, that you had been there so many hours without us. And have you announced your arrival to our host and hostess?"

"I met Lord Ethelwode at the door, and was graciously received; and I was making my way up to her ladyship when I spied you out. But where is my excellent guardian, for I suppose you are not here alone?"

"Oh, no! He is somewhere in the room. But there is no use in going to look for him till this waltz is over; so you may as well sit down here by me, and give me an account of your proceedings since we left you abroad."

Reginald desired no better, so he took the offered seat, and was soon deeply engaged in

answering his companion's multifarious questions, and inquiring in his turn about all that had taken place in his absence.

"Ah! there is Ellen—Miss Percival I should call her, I suppose," said he, as a pause in the waltz brought St. John and his partner nearly opposite to them. "More beautiful than ever, I perceive. Who is that tall handsome man waltzing with her? They make a splendid couple."

"That is Mr. St. John," said Louisa, with a slight return of her former uncomfortable feeling. "He is my father's heir-at-law, you know, and is staying with us for a short time. I believe you met him at Oaklands when you were both boys."

Reginald's face clouded over as he heard the name. It was only two days before that he had heard certain discussions concerning this Mr. St. John at the Traveller's, which disposed him to feel rather sorry at finding him domesticated in the same house with Louisa.

The latter did not remark his change of countenance, and went on talking about other subjects with so much animation that he soon forgot his momentary uneasiness.

It was now Arthur's turn to wonder and feel uncomfortable. As Louisa had told him that she scarcely knew any of the gentlemen in the

room, he could not conceive who was the dark handsome man to whom she was now talking so eagerly, and to whom she listened with so bright a smile. He was evidently an intimate acquaintance, and one in whose conversation she took no small delight. Though Arthur had scarcely spoken to her since the beginning of the evening, he now felt rather indignant that she should listen to any body else; and as soon as the waltz was over, and he had deposited Ellen on her seat, he hastened to interrupt the obnoxious *tête-à-tête*.

“I suppose I must introduce you *en forme* to one another,” said Louisa, “as you do not seem to remember your boyish acquaintance. Mr. St. John—Mr. Talbot.”

The gentlemen bowed rather coldly; but the moment afterwards, St. John, recollecting the absurdity of shewing jealousy towards a man whom Louisa always spoke of as a brother, held out his hand with frank courtesy, and expressed a hope that “so pleasant an acquaintance would be speedily renewed under Miss Conway’s auspices.”

Reginald bowed again, scarcely less stiffly than before. The words he had heard at the Traveller’s were still ringing in his ears, and he could not bear to see the easy footing on which the man thus spoken of seemed to be with

Louisa. She was at a loss to account for his strange demeanour, and turned away displeased that Reginald should receive so haughtily the advances of one whom she had introduced as her father's guest, and standing in such near connexion to him.

"May I have the pleasure of dancing with you, Miss Conway?" said St. John, as the music struck up for another quadrille.

Louisa coloured involuntarily at this tardy civility, but she accepted it, and stood up.

"Louisa," cried Reginald, "surely you meant to dance this quadrille with me."

"Did you name this one? I did not recollect it," and she felt confused, for, in truth, she would have been glad, at that moment, not to have been found ready to dance with Mr. St. John, when he seemed only just to have remembered her presence; however, she was too true to accept any false pretext, and she did *not* remember that Reginald had specified this quadrille.

"You have put in your claim too late, Mr. Talbot," said St. John.

"We have misunderstood each other, Reginald," added Louisa; "but I shall be happy to dance with you all the rest of the evening, if you like." And then, trusting that such a slight mistake would not be misinterpreted by an old

friend like him, she turned away, and allowed St. John to lead her to her place.

Reginald was much displeased—more so, perhaps, than mere dislike to St. John's character quite accounted for; and he walked off in search of Sir Charles Conway and Edward Annesley, who, Louisa had told him, were also there, with feelings very different from those with which he had entered the room. As he proceeded through the apartments, he passed the place where Lady Frances and her youngest daughter were sitting, somewhat disconsolately.

"Mr. Talbot!" exclaimed Lady Frances, as her eye fell upon his figure. "From what cloud have you dropped, in this abrupt manner? I thought you were in London. Do come and sit here, and tell me by what strange chance you happen to be here."

Reginald could not sit down, however; he was in search of his guardian, whom he had not yet seen, and could only answer, in as few words as possible, the lady's eager questions.

"What a bear Mr. Talbot has grown!" exclaimed she, as he passed on his way. "I should not have spoken to him a minute, but that I thought, perhaps, he would ask you to dance, Fanny."

"So did I, mamma. It is very provoking to

sit still in this way all the evening. I never was so bored in my life."

"My poor child! It is hard upon you; but really the men seem to have no eyes to-night for any one but Ellen Percival."

"Louisa is dancing, however, mamma, and so is Minna—*she* always gets partners."

"Because she talks more than you, my dear."

"I think it looks very like flirting," said Fanny, in a lower tone; "and that I could never bring myself to do."

"All nonsense, my dear. Now, Minna.... But, dear me, who is that she is talking to now?"

"Mr. Hope. She has danced with him twice."

"What, Lord Hope's younger son? That will never do. I thought she was dancing with the elder brother. I must go and give her a hint; she is so giddy and indiscriminate. You had better come with me, Fanny—perhaps I may get you a partner by the way."

Her purpose was accomplished sooner than she had hoped for. As she was making her way through the crowd, she found herself near a very young and very shy-looking man, whom she chanced to know by name.

"Ah, Mr. Ashton! how glad I am to see you here. If you are not dancing, pray, do lend us your assistance in getting through this dreadful press."

Mr. Ashton was not dancing ; and, as he was not quick enough to devise any other excuse, he nervously offered his arm to the lady.

“ Thank you, thank you. Will you give your other arm to my daughter ? This is really charitable, for it is quite a service of danger to make one’s way through such a crowd. It is a delightful ball, though—the music is quite inspiring. I wonder, Mr. Ashton, you can resist its influence.”

Mr. Ashton pleaded that he was not very fond of dancing, and that he knew very few people in the room.

“ Oh, if you are fond of dancing, and want a partner,” said Lady Frances, “ I am sure Fanny will dance with you, if she is not engaged. Fanny, let me introduce Mr. Ashton.”

After this broad hint, Mr. Ashton could do no otherwise than bow to the young lady, and request the honour of her hand for the next dance ; an honour which she granted without delay.

“ If you are going to dance, you had better take your places at once. Never mind me,—I will go and sit on the sofa beside Lady Ethelwode. If you see your sister, my dear, tell her where I am.”

Away went Fanny, with her nervous and reluctant partner ; whilst Lady Frances, delighted at the success of her manœuvre, took her seat by

Lady Ethelwode, and began expatiating on the extreme delicacy, care, and watchfulness, which were required for the office of chaperon to grown-up daughters. By the time Lady Ethelwode had dropped asleep a dozen times, and been startled again by her friend's louder tone of voice, the room began to thin, and she was obliged to wake up in earnest, to receive her guests' parting compliments. Lady Frances hurried off in search of her daughters, that she might not run any risk of committing the vulgarity of staying till the last.

Both the girls were ready to go; Minna was tired of flirting with younger sons; and Fanny, having been obliged at last to release Mr. Ashton, after having kept him by her side through two waltzes and a quadrille, had been sitting yawning in a corner for some time past. Louisa was ready, too; she was vexed at Reginald's strange conduct in not coming near her again the whole evening, and was beginning to find it rather difficult to keep up her animated conversation with Mr. St. John, whilst her thoughts wandered to the cause of Reginald's coldness towards him.

Reginald was summoned from his conversation with Edward Annesley, and the whole party left the room, after having taken their leave of Lady Ethelwode and Ellen. Edward followed them,

happy schemes for their future companionship, till the village clock, striking five, roused her from her reverie, and sent her to bed to dream of balls and country walks, of Edward Annesley and Mr. St. John, all mingled together in strange and inextricable confusion of times and places.

CHAPTER IX.

"*Speed.* Master, Sir Thurio frowns on you.

"*Valentine.* Ay, boy, 'tis for love."

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

"He resolved to establish his power over her; it became his ambition. For when a man has no other ambition, he will covet a much more insignificant bauble than the mastery over such a woman,"

BULWER, Ernest Maltravers.

Louisa's retrospections after the ball were by no means so pleasant as Ellen's. She also had awakened to a full consciousness of the power of beauty; but to her it was a painful discovery. Though she was incapable of envying her friend, and still rejoiced, as she had hitherto done, in her surpassing loveliness, she, for the first time, reflected with sorrow on her own inferiority; and as most, even of the wisest, women have done, at some time of their lives, she sighed for the frail but precious gift nature had denied her.

Such a feeling could only be transitory in a mind like hers, but it was the sign of another, far deeper and more dangerous to her peace; namely, the consciousness th

tions were no longer a matter of indifference to her. Not that this consciousness was clearly developed, much less openly acknowledged, even to herself. Her pride would not admit the thought that the acquaintance of one short month had power to exercise such an influence over her. It was only Minna's insinuations that made her for a moment entertain such a fear; and it was natural that she should feel hurt at St. John's decided neglect, directly he came within the sphere of Ellen's fascination.

Those who know how long a pure-minded girl shrinks from confessing, even to her inmost heart, a preference which seems indelicate and unwomanly until it has been sought, will not accuse Louisa of any extraordinary self-deception in trying to attribute her uneasy feelings to any cause rather than the true one. It was long before she could quiet her thoughts sufficiently to retire to rest; and she lay down at last with a heart much less at peace than was her wont.

The unusual dissipation of the night, added to this cause, made her feverish and restless. She could not sleep; and, after an hour's uncomfortable tossing, without being able to attain any rest, she rose again, and, wrapping a cloak round her, opened the window in hopes that the fresh air would drive away her headache. The grey dawn was just breaking in the east, whilst over-

head the stars were still shining brightly. Louisa watched them as they gradually paled, and then faded away before the stronger light of day.

It was beautiful to look out on the cool, dewy morning, so pure and sweet in its freshness and subdued colouring, like a child before a breath of passion has swept over its guileless heart; and, more beautiful still, to watch the gradual kindling of the eastern sky, growing more and more intense, till the glorious sun arose "like a giant going forth to run his course," and suddenly lighted up earth and sea as with the visible smile of the Almighty.

Louisa looked out on that prospect, which she had loved to gaze upon since her mind first opened to the love of the beautiful; and under its influence her thoughts grew calm, and the gladsome peace which had been for a while disturbed, brooded again over her heart. The return of day seemed to recall her to its sober duties; and she shook off the recollection of the feverish pleasure and pain of the last night, as the delusions of a dream. By the time that the blue smoke, curling up through the trees from the village chimneys, announced that the inhabitants were astir and about to resume their daily toil, Louisa was dressed and ready to go forth and enjoy to the utmost the beauty of the morning, which she was now glad she had not

been able to sleep away. As she passed through the library into the garden, she started at seeing Reginald standing by one of the bookcases. He turned round at the sound of her footsteps.

"Louisa! How do you happen to be up at such an hour as this, after last night's dissipation?"

"I will answer in the Scotch fashion, by another question," said Louisa, smiling. "What has brought *you* here so early?"

"I could not sleep, so I thought I might as well get up and take a walk this bright morning; and I came here for a book, by way of companion."

"Well, take your book, if you like; but I am going to walk, too...."

"Then farewell to reading for this morning," said Reginald. "Unless you are much changed since we parted, I shall want no pleasanter companion."

"You have been living at court, and have learned to pay compliments," said Louisa, laughing. "But come, we are wasting our time standing here."

The uneasy thoughts which had been tormenting Reginald since the preceding evening, and had driven him forth thus early to seek relief and refreshment after a sleepless night, vanished before Louisa's frank, warm manner, so like

what it used to be in old days. Arthur St. John was forgotten ; and, drawing her arm within his, they were soon out on the lawn, and deliberating which way they should turn their steps.

"I meant to dawdle, not to walk," said Louisa ; "for although I enjoy the air, I do not think I have much energy to spare this morning."

"I thought it was rather a rash undertaking, walking before breakfast after a ball ; but I shall not let you tire yourself. Shall we go down by the rough path to the crag, and rest on our old seat ;—nothing is changed there, I suppose?"

"No, we have had no earthquakes since you left us ; and I do not know what else could effect a change. So let us go ; the footing is none of the best, but the way is short, and it is one of my favourite haunts."

They were soon threading the intricacies of the rocky path ; and after a few minutes' walking, or rather scrambling, they reached the crag—a huge mass of stone, which hung over the water as if it had been suddenly arrested in its fall down the abrupt face of the cliff, and suspended there by some giant hand.

"Do you remember," said Louisa, as they sat down to rest on the bench which had been carved out of the rock, "how proud we both were the first day you induced me to follow you to this place?"

Reginald remembered it well; and, as usual when people begin with the magic words "Do you remember?"—they went on recalling to each other many other days which had been marked with events equally important in their childish intercourse.

Reginald was some years older than Louisa; and, not being gifted with the patience of Edward Annesley, he had taken no notice of his guardian's child, till he discovered in the little girl a spirit as bold and as enterprising as his own, and energy as great, only more untiring from being more calm. From the moment he had made this discovery, he had shewn invariable delight in Louisa's society. As years passed on, and he found each time that he returned to Oaklands that, by her father's care, she was ignorant of none of the subjects in which he took an interest, and that the rapid development of her mind fitted her to be the companion of his graver pursuits and studies, as she had been of his boyish sports, the difference of age was forgotten, and his affection for the child deepened into a stronger and warmer feeling for the young girl.

Of late years, however, their meetings had been more rare, and, with the exception of the short time they had spent together abroad, they had not met for two years. No wonder, then, that on this first day of their renewed inter-

course, there was no end of their mutual reminiscences; of the things that both had to tell and to listen to; to the thousand and one occurrences, too minute to be related in a letter, and which yet are the connecting links of the chain of life; and which required now to be gathered up, that the chasms which absence had made in their mutual knowledge might be filled up, and their intercourse be resumed as fully and freely as if it had never been interrupted.

To Reginald there was too much heartfelt happiness in such a conversation to allow him to remember such sublunary things as time and hunger. He was astonished and half inclined to be angry, when Louisa interrupted herself in the midst of an account of her pursuit of some study which she had begun under his direction, and the difficulties and disgust she had experienced in going on with it alone after his departure, to exclaim that it was time for them to go into breakfast.

"Breakfast-time! impossible! What can make you think of such a thing?"

Louisa pointed to the shadow on the rock. "Do you not remember that we used to call that rock our sundial? See how the shadow has shortened! it reached to that furze-bush when we first sat down; we must have been here nearly three hours."

Reginald was still incredulous, and was on the point of saying that Louisa must be very hungry or very tired of his conversation, to fancy they had been there so long. He did not say it, however; and at this moment all doubts as to the correctness of her calculation were set at rest by the distant sound of the breakfast-bell making itself heard in the intervals between the breaking of the waves on the shore below, and he was reluctantly forced to follow her back to the house. As they crossed the lawn, they saw that most of the party were already assembled in the breakfast-room. St. John was standing at the open window; and as Louisa emerged from the shrubbery, he ran out to meet her. At the sight of Reginald following her, however, he stopped short, and his eager manner changed almost to coldness.

"My dear Louisa," said Sir Charles, as she entered the room, "for once you really deserve a scolding for going out so early after sitting up all night at a ball."

"I could not sleep, so I thought it was better to get up; and I feel more rested now than I did three hours ago. The morning was so delicious, and Reginald and I have been enjoying it together, as we used to do in old times."

St. John walked away to the other side of the room, and Reginald's countenance, which had

been clouded over, brightened again into an expression of pleasure.

"Well, you do not seem to have suffered much from your imprudence," said Sir Charles, patting his daughter's head as he kissed her glowing cheek. "But where have you been, Loo? your hair is quite wet."

"We went to our old seat on the crag," said Reginald, "not to tire Louisa by going too far, and the spray occasionally saluted us with a shower. The wind is rising, and the waves are breaking magnificently on the rocks."

"My dear Louisa," said Lady Frances, "I really wish you would be more like other girls, and not go to such places. It frightens one so dreadfully to think of your clambering about those horrid slippery rocks;—and then it is ruination to your feet and to your complexion, and your hair will turn red from being exposed to the air and salt water. Ah! you will be sorry when you see this happen, that you did not follow my advice."

"Yes, indeed," said Louisa, laughing; "but I am in great hopes it never will happen. And even with the dread of such misfortunes before my eyes, I do not think I could forego the pleasure of such a walk as I have had this morning."

"Mr. Talbot should gi

entertaining, for the benefit of mankind," said St. John, sarcastically. "He must be *maitre-passé* in it, to have made a young lady forget even her complexion in the pleasure of his conversation."

"I am afraid I cannot take all the credit to myself," said Reginald, smiling, for he could afford to be generous just then. "I must be content to share it with the beauty of the morning and the influence of the fresh sea-breeze, which was certainly delicious enough to make one forget every thing, but to enjoy it to the utmost."

"It does, indeed, seem to have made Miss Conway forget every thing," said St. John, in a low voice, as Louisa passed him to take her place at the head of the table, with a look of cold displeasure. She did not seem to hear his words, and began pouring out the tea in silence.

"Where are Minna and Fanny?" asked Sir Charles; "they do not seem disposed to be as alert as Louisa this morning, though they are such much more practised ball-goers."

"Minna will be down presently, I believe," said their mother; "but Fanny says over-exertion spoils her voice, so she always stays in bed half the day after a ball."

"Rather a heavy price to pay for an evening's amusement. But the ball last night was really

worth going to. It was beautifully done—every thing so splendid and in such good taste—and my good neighbour played the host with great effect—not to speak of his pretty step-daughter, who did the honours with as much grace as if she had been bred up in a court.”

“She is really surpassingly beautiful,” said Reginald. “In all my experience of courts, I have never seen any thing to compare with her. I thought, when I was here last, that she could not be more lovely ; but last night I felt as if I had never seen her before, so much did she throw my recollection of her former self into the shade. These two years have added an expression of thought and feeling to her countenance, which makes it more fascinating than all the faultless beauty of her features.”

“It is Ellen then that he admires, after all,” thought St. John ; “he would not praise her so warmly if he cared for the other.” Under the soothing influence of this reflection, St. John’s countenance relaxed into good humour again, and he addressed himself to Louisa, with his usual gaiety of tone. But her manner was reserved and cold. She was evidently displeased ; and all his efforts to lead her into conversation seemed to have the effect of making her reserve still more chilling. He was indignant at his repulse, and relapsed into sullen silence. But

Louisa seemed as provokingly indifferent to his indignation as to his attentions, and talked on to Reginald and her father with as much unconcern as if the most fastidious man in London had not been sitting beside her, chafing at her neglect over his untasted breakfast.

"But, Louisa, you have not yet told us what you think of balls in general, and last night's in particular," said Reginald. "That was the first you ever went to, was it not?"

"Yes; but you must wait for an opinion on balls in general till I have had more opportunity of judging," answered Louisa, blushing as the recollection of the occurrences of the preceding evening, and the sleepless night which had followed, rushed to her mind. "Your sudden return, you know, was a great pleasure, quite independent of the ball."

St. John saw the blush, and attributed it to the recollection of that pleasure. He was glad that breakfast was over, and that the party rose from the table at that moment, for he felt that his irritation must soon have become visible. He took his hat and walked out into the park, to try the effect of fresh air and exercise on his ruffled temper.

"I will think of her no more," said he to himself, as he paced rapidly on. Yet, in spite of this determination, the thought of her per-

petually recurred. He was surprised and angry at the unaccountable influence she exercised over him, and told himself, over and over again, that her pride, her caprice, her coldness, were odious, insupportable in a woman, and that she was perfectly indifferent to him; but the next moment he found himself pondering upon her looks and words, and trying to account for the change in her manner.

This was absurd, ridiculous. He had sought her society from mere curiosity—the novelty of her character—her superiority over the women he was used to see—had made him feel that it would be a triumph such as he had never yet achieved, to make her yield to his influence; and was he now to find himself foiled in that oft-played game by an inexperienced country girl? Was he to be caught in his own net, and find that, in playing with her affections, he had endangered his own? He laughed to scorn the thought of such a possibility, and resolved to prove his utter indifference to her attractions, and his freedom from any such humiliating thralldom, by leaving Oaklands as soon as he decently could, and meanwhile to spend his time more profitably in improving his acquaintance with Lady Ethelwode's beautiful daughter. It would be a satisfaction to see Louisa's mortification,

which all her pride would not enable her wholly to conceal. But here he stopped short.

The thought of Reginald flashed across his mind. Should he then withdraw just as his haughty rival appeared, as if he feared to stand the contest? Would it not look as if he yielded hopelessly to his superior claims? Such a thought was unendurable—he would stay—he would pursue his object in defiance of Reginald—he would make the proud girl who had dared shew him her indifference feel and acknowledge his power, and then—then it would be time enough to think of leaving Oaklands.

CHAPTER X.

"Young, handsome, and of opposite sexes, they agreed to be friends and nothing more! Fools!"—*Ernest Maltravers.*

Edward Annesley did not forget his promise of calling at the castle the day after the ball. Ellen was already looking out for him, and came to meet him as soon as she descried his figure among the trees.

Although she was somewhat paler, in consequence of her unwonted dissipation, and the restless night which had succeeded it, he thought her not less beautiful by daylight, and in her simple morning attire, than he had in last night's full blaze of light, with all the advantages of dress.

She greeted him with the same gleeful simplicity of former days. "I am so glad you are come! I was half afraid you would forget your promise; though you never used to do so. I should have been so disappointed!"

Annesley thought there was little fear of his forgetting a promise, when he could be rewarded for keeping it by such words as these, uttered in

the most musical of voices, and accompanied by a smile so radiant, that it might have won to mirth the crying philosopher himself. He gave utterance, however, only to the first of these reflections, and added, with a smile, that he hoped to prove that he was not less punctual than formerly in keeping promises—agreeable ones especially.

“Where shall we begin our tour of inspection?” said Ellen. “Shall we go first to the little flower-garden, or to the old oak by the waterfall, or . . .”

“Had I not better go first to pay my respects to Lord and Lady Ethelwode? I suppose that will be the most proper mode of proceeding.”

“I know little about the propriety of the case,” said Ellen; “but it will be a very useless proceeding, for mamma is still in bed, and will, probably, not get up all day; and Lord Ethelwode (Ellen had retained her old dislike to giving her stepfather any more tender appellation) is out riding with Egbert.”

“Well, since that matter is settled,” said Edward, “I am at your orders, Miss Percival.”

Ellen looked up with a feeling of unpleasant surprise. In all their former intercourse, he had been wont to call her “Ellen,” and this ceremonious appellation reminded her, rather chillingly, of the difference which the lapse of years

had placed in their relative positions. She took no notice, however; only telling herself that she must be careful in remembering to call him "Mr. Annesley," since he chose to take up so formal a tone; and there was something less of child-like glee in her manner as they proceeded on their walk.

"Here is the old tree!" exclaimed she, as they issued from the shady path they had been following into an open space of rich green turf, which was almost surrounded by a barrier of rocks, over which the clear stream leapt into a pool below. The huge oak stood in the midst of the green, casting its broad shadow to the very edge of the water. "Now tell me, have you seen any thing, since you went away, more beautiful than this little nook?"

"No, indeed! I have often thought of this old tree, and wished I was seated under it, when I have been studying in my close rooms, on a hot summer's day. How lightly these six long years seemed to have passed over this spot: one could almost fancy old Time had forgotten it, or had not been able to find his way to it, so few signs are there of his passage."

"Even our names, that we carved in the bark the day before you went away, are still there. Look, Ed. . . . Mr. Annesley, I mean—look at the two 'E's' and the date, as plain as if it had

been done yesterday ; and yet six long years have passed since then !”

“ And sixty more may pass, and leave this spot still fresh and beautiful, whilst we, meanwhile, shall have run our long course of change and toil, of joy and sorrow, and perhaps be laid beneath the green sod, which others, now unborn, will then be treading.”

“ It is this thought which often destroys or at least saddens my enjoyment of the beauty of Nature,” said Ellen. “ She has no sympathy for us, but looks equally bright, whether we are glad or sorrowful. She remains unchanged, whilst every day brings a change to us.”

“ And to Nature, also, could we discern her secret processes,” said Edward. “ Only think of the long series of changes by which this rock has been slowly formed, the convulsions by which, from its original horizontal position, it has been thrown into that in which we now see it, and broken into those fantastic masses. Think of the many changes this little spot must have undergone, whilst the soil, brought from afar by the waters, was gradually accumulated upon the rocky ledge, and the seeds, wafted by a thousand breezes, dropped upon it, and vegetation sprung up, binding the loose earth into the firm sod which it is now, making it fit for the footsteps of man—or even since the acorn was

planted by some hand, long ago turned to dust, from whence this splendid oak has sprung. You see, Nature must also obey the universal law of change and progression, though the processes may be so slow as not to be sensible to us."

This was a new thought to Ellen, and she pondered silently upon it, as they proceeded towards the flower-garden.

"There are changes enough here!" cried Edward, as they reached it. "I should hardly have known this garden, it is so much improved."

"Do you really think so? I am glad of that; for the changes are all of my making. Mamma has given up this little garden to me, and I spend half my days in it, altering and arranging, and making the poor gardener wish me and my vagaries a thousand miles off. I have not changed *every* thing, however. Look; there is the bench, under the sycamore tree, just as it was when we used to sit there, when you taught me to read. I would not have it moved, because I like to think of those happy days. I have often wondered since how you could have patience to bear with my petulance and ill-humour."

Annesley thought he could still bear a great deal, for the sake of having his forbearance thus remembered. "And was that Italian lady I saw last night my successor?" he asked.

"Yes; and a good-natured, easy creature she

is, though not a very intellectual companion—at least, when compared with Louisa Conway, the only other intimate acquaintance I have ever had. But then, I am sure Louisa must be superior to most women: so well-informed, so high-minded; such a true, warm-hearted, generous friend! She was away a long time on the continent, and I was very lonely till she came back.”

“My friend Reginald speaks of her as you do,” said Annesley; “so I must needs believe that Miss Conway is incomparable: but, with such a father as her’s it would have been strange, indeed, if she had not attained to excellence. Few women are blessed with such advantages.”

“Few, indeed!” said Ellen, sighing. “How few find in their nearest relations, their dearest and wisest friends, guides and instructors!”

Edward felt it was her own case she was thus generalising, and his heart grieved for the lonely girl, deprived of the inestimable blessing of reverencing those whom she was bound to obey; and so feelingly alive to her own position. Ellen was conscious that his voice became gentler, his manner kinder, after this; and her own manner lost the shade of constraint which the beginning of their conversation had inspired. They wandered on through the gardens, then to Ellen’s favourite pavilion, where the sight of books introduced the subject of literature; and Ellen

found that not even Louisa could speak so delightfully, so eloquently, upon these subjects, as Edward Annesley, when enthusiasm made him forget his natural reserve. Some German books lying on the table, induced him to ask her if she were acquainted with the language.

"No; I have been trying to puzzle it out a little by myself, because Louisa's admiration of German authors gave me a great wish to read them; but I have almost given it up in despair."

"Do you always allow yourself to be thus easily defeated?" asked Annesley, with a smile.

"I fear I do. I soon get weary of working on alone, and this is rather like working in the dark, for I have no one to tell me if I go right or wrong. Even Louisa has no time now to help me."

"I am something of a German scholar myself," said Edward, moved with the sudden wish to be useful to one who seemed to have so few to assist her; "if I can help you, I shall be happy to do so; my grammars and dictionaries are quite at your service, and my instructions also, if you will accept them."

Accept them! Never was offer more eagerly or joyfully embraced. Already Ellen saw, in imagination, all her anticipations of finding again in Edward the friend and companion of her childhood fully realised, and the radiant

smile with which she thanked him made him feel that he was abundantly rewarded for his benevolent intentions on her behalf. It was with a step even lighter, a countenance brighter, than before, that she left the summer-house, and continued to lead him on from one favourite spot to another; now stopping to point out some stately tree; now springing away to gather the wild flowers, which her glance of love never failed to discover in their shadiest lurking places; now pausing to watch silently the fishing-boats running home into the little creek, or the shadows of the clouds, passing like a dream over the sunny dell, till the yellow glow of sunlight on the stems of the trees warned Edward that it was time to take his leave. When they reached the drawbridge, they parted, with a sigh from Ellen, that the happy day was over, and an earnest request that he would come again soon, and give her the first of his promised lessons.

The next day the German books arrived from the parsonage, but Edward did not come with them. He had reflected, on his return home, upon the offer he had made, and had felt, not without self-reproach, that he had acted with something less than his usual prudence, in thus opening the way to the renewal of his former intimacy with Ellen. He did not fear the danger

to himself. He felt secure enough, that, notwithstanding all her beauty, Lady Ethelwode's daughter, and Mademoiselle Juliani's pupil, was not the woman for whom he could ever feel a serious attachment; but the world would see his intercourse with her in another light, and would probably make comments on it injurious to her, and distressing to them both. He reproached himself for not having considered this before he made his thoughtless offer; but, as it was too late now to retract, he could only resolve to be more prudent in future, and to take care that his intercourse with her should be such that the most censorious could find nothing to say against it.

Ellen was much disappointed, for she had looked forward all the morning to his arrival, and had already chalked out another walk, to be taken after the German lesson was over. She thought that he must have been accidentally detained; and, as it rained all the afternoon, so as to preclude all possibility of walking, she bore the disappointment, on the whole, very philosophically, comforting herself with the assurance that he would certainly come on the morrow. But when the morrow passed away, and another day after that, and still no Edward made his appearance, Ellen's philosophy, a virtue for which she

was, certainly, not remarkable, gave way to vexation and disappointment.

She pushed away the German book she had been trying in vain to understand, and gave herself up to the discontented mood which had come over her. She was sure that Edward had forgotten both her and his promise. He had, no doubt, found pleasanter society than hers at Oaklands, with Louisa and Reginald,—no wonder, when they were both so clever, so agreeable, whilst she was ignorant, uncultivated, foolish. She was angry with herself, for having supposed, for a moment, that it would be otherwise—for having dreamt that Edward would give up his time and society to her, when Oaklands was at hand, with all its attractions. Happy Oaklands! Why was she always told that beauty was the most invaluable of all possessions, when she daily saw Louisa sought after, admired, loved, whilst she was neglected and forgotten?

“Oh!” she exclaimed aloud, “what would I not give to be able to exchange all this worthless beauty for a mind like Louisa’s!”

“Miss Percival, what are you talking about?” said Mademoiselle Juliani, entering at that moment with Lady Ethelwode, whose daily exercise generally consisted in sauntering through the garden to the summer-house, where she could rest on Ellen’s sofa from the fatigue of her five

minutes' walk, and then slowly saunter back again to her own sofa in the boudoir. "What are you saying," continued the Italian, "that you would exchange your divine beauty to be like Miss Conway, who is so plain!"

"Miss Conway is not plain," said Ellen, bluntly, "no one can be plain with such a countenance as hers; but it was not of her person I was speaking, but of her mind."

"My dear Ellen," said Lady Ethelwode, as she languidly sank into a chair, "what is there in Louisa's mind for *you* to covet? It is very well for her who, as Mademoiselle says, is so plain, and who, after her father's death, will not even be rich, to desire mind and talent, and that sort of thing; but why you, lovely as you are, should trouble yourself about them, is more than I can understand."

"Will this beauty you talk of," exclaimed Ellen, passionately, "give me such friends as Louisa possesses? Will it make my society agreeable to the intellectual and the high-minded, who are far above being moved by such worthless attractions as mine? Can beauty comfort me in sorrow, strengthen me in adversity, or cheer me in my loneliness? All this Louisa's power of mind may do for her; prove then that beauty will do as much for me, and I will no longer wish to exchange with her."

"I am sure I do not know. As for all you have been saying, it is perfect nonsense! I have gone through life very well with the same advantages you have, and have been often envied, too; and I never remember troubling myself to consider whether I had a mind or not. I have always had plenty of friends and society, and all that sort of thing, and so will you, I dare say; so what can be the use of making your eyes red with fretting because you are not Louisa Conway?"

"Besides," interposed Mademoiselle Juliani, in her softest tones, "I cannot understand why Miss Percival should fancy Miss Conway so superior; for my part, I never could see it. I am sure she is not more agreeable; and, as to accomplishments, there can certainly be no comparison between Miss Conway's drawings, and *il canto divino*, of Miss Percival. Then she speaks Italian with a barbarous accent, which quite wounds my poor ears! To be sure, she understands Latin and Greek, and has studied mathematics, and frightens every body by her learning; but I cannot think that will make her the better liked in society. Superior to *la bella Ellena*! no, I cannot see that."

"Perhaps she would not have been superior," exclaimed Ellen, more bitterly than before; "perhaps even I might have been equal to her;

at least I should not now be thus humbled, under the sense of my own inferiority, and ignorance, and worthlessness, if the power God gave me had been cultivated like hers!—if,” she continued, gradually growing more vehement, “if I had not been allowed to grow up like a wild plant, without care or cultivation, to turn out ill or well, as my lot might happen, if I had ever obtained affection, or guidance, or instruction from those who were bound to give me all and more than all these.”

“Now, Ellen, I must say you are a very ungrateful girl,” said Lady Ethelwode, roused for once out of habitual supineness, “after my doing every thing I could for you, taking so much trouble to procure you the best governess in England, at an enormous expense (though certainly Mademoiselle Juliani’s services are worth any money I can pay for them), and after my allowing you every indulgence, and even going through the dreadful fatigue of that ball, the other day, for your sake, to hear you turn round and say, I have neglected you! I am sure, if you have grown up wildly, as you say, it is all your own fault; you never would bear restraint; you know, as a child, poor Mary never could manage you, and with my delicate health, of course I could not be expected to attempt it; and it is very wrong of you to blame

me now, for having been too indulgent to you, in allowing you to be happy your own way, instead of plaguing you to death with lessons, like Louisa Conway or the Montagues. I did not expect this would have been my reward; you are too ungrateful, Ellen!" and the mother sank back exhausted in her chair, overcome with the sense of her child's ingratitude, and with the unusual exertion of making so long a speech.

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed the poor girl, bursting into tears, and throwing herself at Lady Ethelwode's feet, as the tide of passion now took a different course. "Forgive me! I know I am wrong! I know I am passionate and wilful, and odious, to others as well as to myself! But I would become gentle as a lamb; I would obey you, and love you, more, yes, more even than Louisa Conway loves her father, if you would but sometimes speak a few kind words to me; if you would but let me feel that I have a mother; that I am not utterly alone and friendless in the world!" She hid her face in her hands and sobbed aloud.

"Now, really, Ellen," said Lady Ethelwode, astonished at her daughter's violent emotion, "this is foolish, quite silly. Of course you have a mother, since I am still alive, though such scenes as this would soon kill me; and as to kind words, I do not know that I ever speak un-

kindly to you. And what can have put into your head that you are alone and friendless, and have made you work yourself up into this state? Now, pray do not cry so, Ellen, it is so distressing, and my nerves are already dreadfully shaken by this scene. You will ruin your eyes too, and make such a figure of yourself! There, there's a good girl! do not cry any more,"—kissing her as she spoke—"and get up, and do not let any such nonsense get into your head again."

Ellen's tears were now effectually repressed. There is, perhaps, no moment when the heart feels so chilled and mortified, as when it has opened its inmost recesses, and poured out its full tide of passion, and suddenly finds that it has thus bared itself to cold or careless eyes. She rose in silence, angry with herself for having given way to her feelings before those who could so little understand them.

Lady Ethelwode rose also. "Mademoiselle Juliani, pray give me your arm; I am so shaken and fatigued I must go home immediately. Ellen, you had better come too, and lie down a little. You had rather not? very well, then, do as you like; I only hope you will never be so foolish as to make such a scene as this again; it would certainly be the death of me." And so saying, Lady Ethelwode took the arm of her *dame de compagnie*, and walked slowly away.

Ellen watched them till the winding of the path hid them from her sight, and then, throwing herself once more on the ground, she hid her face on the sofa where her mother had been lying, and gave way without restraint to the tears which were choking her. She was still in this position, though the violence of her grief had somewhat subsided, when, about an hour afterwards, her brother rushed breathlessly into the summer-house.

"Nelly ! Nelly ! where are you ? Asleep on the floor, I declare ! Is this the way you spend your time, when you make me believe that you are studying German all the morning ? Oh, fie !"

Ellen started to her feet, and hastily brushed away the two large tears which were slowly rolling down her cheeks, as she asked him what he wanted with her.

"What is the matter with you, Nelly ?" said the boy, unheeding her question. "Your face is as pale as a ghost, and your eyes as red as my ferret's : you have been crying, I'm sure. Now tell me who has been vexing you, Nelly dear ; and I will pay them off, even if it were papa himself."

"Nobody has vexed me," said Ellen. "I have vexed myself with my own foolish fancies, so you can do me no good, dear ;" and she

kissed her little champion as she spoke. "Now tell me what you wanted me for?"

"It was Louisa Conway who sent me for you; she is at the door with two gentlemen, and she is going to take a long ride, and wants you and me to ride with them."

"I cannot ride to-day," said Ellen, hastily; "I am not fit to be in company with any one."

"Oh yes, indeed, you are, Nell! and you will keep your veil down, and nobody will see you have been crying; and they shan't even speak to you if you do not like it: *I* will prevent them; so *do* come; I shall not enjoy the ride at all unless you come with us."

This was a potent reason, for Egbert was not less spoiled by Ellen than by the rest of the household; and at that moment especially she felt as if any sacrifice of her private comfort would be amply repaid by the consolation of knowing that her presence was giving pleasure to somebody. So she allowed Egbert to run off in triumph, and announce her arrival to the party at the door, while she hurried away to her own room, to efface as much as possible the traces of her recent agitation, and to change her dress in preparation for her ride.

It was still further consolation to find, when she joined the party, that Edward Annesley was not one of the two gentlemen Egbert had men-

tioned ; and when she found out from Louisa, by a little cross-questioning, that he had called but once at Oaklands, and then without finding them at home, her spirits rose, and she sprang so lightly on her horse, that Mr. St. John half wondered whether any thing so coarse and heavy as our mortal clay could enter into the composition of so fairy-like a being.

Ellen met his look, and easily read its expression of undisguised admiration. It was with a vivid sensation of pleasure that she perceived that even in Louisa's presence her beauty had not lost its power, and, forgetful of the morning's sufferings, she inwardly felt that she would not now exchange that magic beauty for all the powers of intellect she had so lately and so ardently coveted.

The fresh breeze on the sea-shore effaced whatever yet remained of the morning's depression ; but, what was still better, it also effaced the vain thoughts which had momentarily succeeded it. There was no pleasure equal, in Ellen's estimation, to that of galloping on the smooth beach, the fresh breeze blowing in her face, the waves breaking at her horse's feet ; and no one could have recognized in the being, glowing with animation, and managing her spirited steed with the perfect ease and grace of one used to ride from childhood, the pale, desolate girl, whom Egbert

had found one short hour before weeping on the floor of the summer-house.

She was riding on with St. John, rather in advance of the rest of the party, and, suddenly, at the instigation of Egbert, they started off together to gallop to a certain point. Louisa followed them with her eyes, whilst she kept a more steady pace with Reginald. "How beautifully they both ride!" she exclaimed; "it is a pleasure to look on any thing so graceful, especially as grace is so rarely united to quick motion."

"She certainly manages that fiery Arab admirably," said Reginald.

"And Mr. St. John seems to form a part of his horse; one cannot imagine any possible accident which could throw him out of his seat. He is worthy to ride with Ellen."

"Yes, they are well matched," said Reginald—"perhaps as well in other things as in riding or in personal appearance."

"What do you mean?"

"That we might trace a further resemblance in unsteadiness of character, in volatility of mind, and——"

Louisa looked at him with some astonishment. "You do not spare my friends," she said, in a tone of displeasure; "may I ask what they have done to deserve your censure?"

"I have no wish to be censorious," replied

Reginald; "and, as far as Miss Percival is concerned, I draw my knowledge of her character from yourself: as to Mr. St. John....." Here he hesitated, and Louisa interposed.

"And what do you know of Mr. St. John which justifies you in extending to him a censure which would fall heavier upon him than upon a girl of seventeen?—what do you know of him, except that he is a clever, well-informed man, and a most agreeable companion?"

"What I *know* of him is little, and I grant the fascination of his manners and conversation; even I am forced to yield to it, though....."

"Though you have taken such an unaccountable dislike to him—but it is unlike you, Reginald, to detract from a man's character because you dislike him yourself."

"Louisa! you are unjust to me in your warmth for your new friend. Yet, so be it—I must submit." And this submissive gentleman struck his spurs violently into his horse as he spoke, and made him rear up into the air. The trouble he was forced to take to subdue the indignation of the high-spirited animal somewhat calmed his irritated feelings, and he came up to Louisa again in a softer mood. "I have offended you, I see; but will you, who are never suspicious, begin by suspecting your oldest friend of unworthy mo-

tives, because he claims the privilege of warning you?"

"Warning me!"

"Yes, Louisa, lest, before you are aware of it, a sinister influence should steal over you, and rob you of your peace of mind and your power of judging. Will you not forgive me?"

Louisa coloured, looked angry, was about to speak, then checked herself, and, just as a proud answer was upon her lips, she met Reginald's anxious and rather sorrowful glance, and she was subdued. "I thank you for your kind intention," she said, with some emotion, "but you are quite mistaken; I am vexed that you should imagine, that you should believe....."

What Louisa was vexed that he should imagine or believe was left for Reginald to conjecture, for the rest of the party now joined them; and, during the remainder of the ride, he had no other opportunity of speaking to her in private. But she returned home annoyed and uneasy—now feeling humbled that Reginald should have thought such a warning necessary, now angry because, in her secret heart, she was forced to acknowledge that he was right. That evening St. John found it more difficult than usual to engross her conversation; and, if it had not been for the cloud on her brow, Reginald would have felt happy.

CHAPTER XI.

“There is a dangerous silence in that hour—
A stillness, which leaves room for the full soul
To open all itself, without the power
Of calling wholly back its self-control.
The silver light, which, hallowing tree and tower,
Sheds beauty and deep softness o’er the whole,
Breathes also to the heart, and o’er it throws
A loving languor, which is not repose.”

When Ellen returned from her ride, she found that Edward had called during her absence. Her vexation at this *contretemps* was, however, dispelled by learning from her stepfather that he had asked Mr. Annesley to dinner, and that the invitation had been accepted. She was not a little surprised at this voluntary act of condescension on the part of Lord Ethelwode towards one who, though of old and good family, had no pretensions to high birth. But the cause soon appeared. Mr. Annesley had chanced to meet Lord Ethelwode as he was leaving the castle, and he had expressed his admiration of the venerable structure not only in enthusiastic but in judicious terms, showing a knowledge of the subject, which equally astonished and delighted the noble owner.

The offer of the latter to show him all that was best worth seeing within and without the walls had been eagerly accepted by Edward ; and, in the course of their walk, Lord Ethelwode, having requested his assistance in ascertaining the date of a certain old tower, which had hitherto set at fault his antiquarian lore, Edward had brought forward several strong arguments in support of a theory which supposed it to be at least a century older than the date Lord Ethelwode had been inclined to assign to it.

Nothing more was wanting to convince his lordship that the young clergyman must be a very superior person — “ Very superior, indeed,” he said, “ to the generality of young men in these days ; no affectation, no pretension about him ; bringing forward his opinions with manly modesty, and shewing a thorough knowledge of the subject he conversed upon, so very unusual in these superficial, frivolous times. I should certainly have wished to be of use to him, as far as lies in my power, for his grandfather’s sake ; but now I would exert myself on his own account, as I feel assured he is deserving of preferment.

“ Ellen, I request you to be particularly civil to him to-night. He will be a frequent guest in this house, and I wish him to feel he is a welcome one. Such merit should be properly appreciated and rewarded.”

Ellen smiled at the thought of her stepfather's recommending to her to appreciate Edward's merits, and requesting her to act with becoming civility towards him; and she bounded up stairs to prepare for dinner with feelings very different from those with which she had descended that same staircase two hours before to go out riding. Her toilette was speedily performed, although she bestowed a little more care on it than usual, and she hastened down to the drawing-room to receive Annesley before the rest of the party were assembled.

She found him already arrived. "I do not think I ought to shake hands with so false a knight," said she, smiling; "is this your punctiliousness in keeping promises?"

"I will boldly plead 'not guilty,'" said Edward, taking her hand in spite of her threatened refusal. "I sent the books most punctually, but the rest of my engagement rested on very vague terms; and when to-day I called to fulfil it in part, I found my pupil flown."

"Yes; because the pupil was tired of waiting for her faithless master, and would wait no longer. You know, of old, she never was remarkable for patience."

"But, have my books been of any use to you?" asked Edward, wishing to avoid her direct attack—"have you done any thing with them?"

"Very little; there was no magic in the books to make the task of studying alone less irksome, and that is what I have no energy for."

"Have you taxed your energy to the utmost?" said Edward, smiling; "without that there is little hope of making much progress, whether alone or with others."

"Oh! but it is so different to have some one by, to apply to in case of need; to know where to find a helping hand, instead of struggling on alone against the difficulties which meet one at every step."

Could Edward refuse, after this, to stretch forth that helping hand, or avoid promising his assistance in that or any other pursuit, whenever his professional duty left him at leisure. At all events, he satisfied his own conscience that this was unavoidable, and Ellen was made happy by the assurance.

The rest of the family now dropped in, and dinner was announced. As Edward was the only guest, the party was too small for any thing but general conversation, if that could deserve the name, which consisted of languid half-sentences from Lady Ethelwode, echoed and amplified by Mademoiselle Juliani, of Lord Ethelwode's sneers at his silly wife, intermixed with efforts to turn the conversation upon his favourite topic; and of Edward's endeavours to

answer the latter, without noticing the former. Ellen sat almost silent, except when answering her brother's eager questions, or trying to silence his clamour—an effort which was mostly ineffectual, as Egbert knew that he might be rude and boisterous with impunity in his father's presence.

Tiresome and disagreeable, however, as the boy's manners often were, Edward quickly perceived that he was the only person at table by whom Ellen was not considered a complete cipher; and he now understood why she bore so gently his incessant and petulant demands upon her attention, and received almost with gratitude his boisterous caresses. Before dinner was over, he had seen enough of her home life to read plainly some of the traits of her character which had seemed strange to him before; the whole secret of her life lay disclosed in her manner to that wayward boy! And, as he read it, must he not have been more or less than man, had he not felt a deeper compassion for the lonely girl, so exposed to temptation from within and peril from without, and left to struggle against both, with no other guide than the impulse of a naturally pure and noble, but utterly undisciplined mind; and, yielding to the influence of that compassion, he determined that no overstrained scruple or selfish fear for himself

should prevent his lending her such assistance as he could, in treading her dangerous path? Every feeling as a man, a Christian, a minister of the gospel, urged him to this course; and no evil could come of it, so long as he watched over himself, and preserved untainted the present purity and disinterestedness of his motives.

After the ladies had left the dining-room, the noble host renewed the conversation which had so interested him in the afternoon, and, having finally settled the antiquity of the tower to his own satisfaction, he retired as usual to his library, where it was his custom to spend most part of his evenings alone, amongst the ponderous folios whose pages offered far superior charms to him than the insipid society of his wife and her *dame de compagnie*, or even of his beautiful daughter-in-law, whom he disliked, partly because she was Lady Ethelwode's child, partly because her proud spirit could never brook in silence his continual sneers at her mother, who herself bore them patiently, from her perception being seldom quick enough to discern their sarcastic meaning.

Lord Ethelwode was a studious man, after a certain fashion; he had read much, and was no mean antiquarian; but his very studies were perverted from their nobler uses to pamper his ruling passion. He sought not in the page of

history for wisdom, gathered from the experience of ages; he only valued its records as they enabled him to trace the high deeds of his ancestors, from the Saxon Jarl, who had fought and bled at Hastings, to the chivalrous baron, his grandfather, who had fallen a victim at Preston-Pans to his devoted attachment to the ill-fated Stuarts.

He sought not, in his antiquarian researches, for the traces of the spirit of change and progression, which slowly, but unceasingly, works over the whole earth, silently altering the faces of things, and carrying man imperceptibly on through each successive stage of civilization;—he looked there only for the knowledge which might enable him to affix the date of their remote antiquity to his ancestral towers, and give a “local habitation and a name” to the vague traditions of the fame and power of the house of Ethelwode, on which his imagination delighted to dwell. Like the fabled king of old, who, in his covetousness, converted even the wholesome aliment of existence into gold, and starved in the sight of his gorgeous banquet; so did the one absorbing principle of Lord Ethelwode’s character turn all noble and generous things, and the precious food of the mind itself, to its own base uses, leaving the higher faculties of his being to perish for want of nourishment.

It was to such barren studies as we have spoken of that Lord Ethelwode now retired, leaving Edward, whom he did not consider of sufficient consequence to interfere with his usual habits, to return to the ladies alone. When he reached the drawing-room, he found only Lady Ethelwode and Mademoiselle Juliani there; the former gently nodding in her ample *bergère*, while her attendant finished to herself the novel with which she had read her patroness to sleep. "Miss Percival is in the garden," said she, in a low voice, in answer to Annesley's inquiries—"there you can see her on the bench under the sycamore tree."

"Thank you, I will join her; the evening is too fine to remain in-doors." In a few minutes he was by Ellen's side, sitting on the same bench, under the same tree where they had sat as children, while he initiated her into the mysteries of the alphabet.

"What a lovely evening it is!" said Ellen, as he joined her; "I am glad you have preferred this seat in the open air to the hot drawing-room."

"My presence was not at all needed there, as Lady Ethelwode was asleep, and Mademoiselle Juliani reading. I should have felt it almost a sin to waste in the house this most beautiful hour of the day."

“Do you think sunset the *most* beautiful hour?” said Ellen; “to me the early morning always seems more beautiful still. It is so fresh, so dewy in its brightness, before a single human sound has broken its stillness, or the toil and turmoil of the busy day has begun. I often think that the beauty of a bright summer’s dawn must be like that of Eve before the fall; it is so pure, so calm, so untainted by any touch of sin or sorrow!”

“Then might the beauty of evening be compared to that of the penitent Magdalen,” said Edward; “more rich and glowing in its hues, but bearing the traces of human passion and suffering, though both are now stilled into peace.”

Ellen’s countenance glowed with pleasure on finding that her companion could understand and enter into her fanciful imaginings, and she gave way to the feelings the hour inspired, without fear of being chilled by apathy or ridicule.

“I often wonder, as I sit here,” said she, after a short silence, “that there should be sin and suffering in such a beautiful world — that men should live in strife and turmoil, when all nature is in peace and harmony around them.”

“It is because men too seldom look upon the face of Nature, or heed the lessons it would teach them,” answered Edward; “they shut themselves up in dense, smoky cities, and bend

the whole power of their energies to the acquirement of some worldly object, good in itself, perhaps, but unworthy of occupying the whole soul of man; and, in the pursuit of this shadow, they lose their richest inheritance—the power of feeling and admiring such scenes as these. If men would but come forth from their brick walls, and leave behind them their anxious cares, and walk abroad with a free spirit, and a heart open to receive its influence, what lessons of love, and wisdom, and faith, might they not read from the book of Nature—lessons which would make them return to the office, the shop, and the factory, with purer and stronger minds, and a better knowledge of what is worth the care and anxiety of an immortal being!"

"But you speak of the inhabitants of towns, as if they alone lived in strife and toil. But in the country, in the villages built in the very midst of Nature's loveliest scenes, where men cannot lift up their eyes without seeing her richness and beauty, do they live for higher and purer objects than in cities? In this very spot, for instance," pointing as she spoke to the straggling lights which twinkled through the deep shadow in which the village lay, "how much of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, is working in those cottages which seem as if they should be the abode only of peace and virtue!"

“Yes, in villages as in towns; in the country as in the crowded metropolis, the leaven of evil is too surely at work in human hearts; and when they are hardened by too heavy toil, or by the love of gain, or the constant and fretting anxiety about providing things necessary for the body, whilst the greater need of the spiritual nature is unthought of, it is no wonder that they look on the face of Nature with eyes insensible to its beauty; that its salutary influence has no power on minds so debased and blunted.”

“Such thoughts as these sadden even this beautiful scene,” said Ellen; “it is mournful to think, that while its loveliness is filling our hearts with joy, and peace, and thankfulness, there are so many human beings near us, to whom it is a mere voiceless blank, who pursue their petty strife or low pleasures, as if there were no blue heavens above them, to look up to in wonder; no wide sea, with its beautiful and mysterious voice to stir their hearts to awe.”

“It is painful to feel this; but there is consolation in the assurance, that if there are some unhappy dwellers in those cottages who ‘have eyes but see not, ears and hear not,’ all the sounds and sights of Nature, which might make their hearts purer and happier, there are others who drink in their beauty with a delight as keen as our own; who find, in such communings with

Nature, strength to bear their heavy burdens, and faith to enable them to cast away each anxious thought, and food for their intellectual and moral being, which their poverty denies them the power of seeking in books, as we do."

"But are there really any such as these in *our* village?"

"Yes; and such I doubt not there are in every village and city throughout the land. If you knew how much there is in those very cottages of active charity and devotedness of faith, nobly struggling against trial and temptation—of affection strong as death, you would look upon them with far different feelings; you would feel that they give a deeper and holier interest to the scene, which now they seem to you to sadden."

"But still," said Ellen, after a pause, "if there is not sin, there is suffering; and the sorrow of such hearts as those you speak of is even more painful to remember than the hardened sensibility of others."

"No," said Edward, "not when we remember also the good which such hearts work out for themselves from their very affliction; how they learn to consider such suffering as a part of the necessary discipline and purification of the heart and mind, which is the purpose of our earthly life, and sanctify their sorrows by making them the means of exercising a stronger faith, a purer

self-denial. Suffering endured, in such a spirit as this, is like the rain which fertilizes and enriches the earth, which too much sunshine might have hardened into barrenness."

Ellen was silent. She had never before viewed human suffering in this light; and she thought of her own trials, her own sorrows, and was humbled to think how little she had ever sanctified them to such noble uses. In how different a spirit had she borne her burden!

It was some time before the increasing beauty of the evening, or even Edward's conversation, could win her from these painful musings, or chase the feelings they had called up. At length, however, they gave way to the influence of the hour, and the happiness of having a companion who could feel it like herself, who could understand and sympathize in her silent delight.

Neither of them thought of returning to the house; and they sat there till the reflection of the sunset sky upon the sea deepened into crimson—then changed to orange, paled again to lilac, and at last faded into the dim grey of twilight. And when the twilight deepened into night they still sat there, watching star after star become visible in the deep blue of the heavens, till it was studded with constellations, and marking the gradual cessation of every sound of life, till all nature seemed hushed into the stillness of sleep,

and the occasional stirring of a leaf, and the almost inaudible murmur of the waters, only made the silence more sensibly felt. They also had sank into silence, for it seemed like sacrilege to break the spell which hung over the scene : they felt they needed not words to express the feelings each knew to be stirring in the other's mind ; and those hours of silent sympathy created a bond between them, and drew their hearts more closely together than years of common intercourse would have done.

How much longer they would have remained there, in total forgetfulness of time and every thing else, is a doubtful question. But, just as the evening star had sunk low enough on the horizon, to cast a thread of silvery light upon the trembling waters, they were startled by the sound of Egbert's voice, loudly calling upon them to come into tea. There was no possibility of disobeying this summons, as they would gladly have done, for Ellen knew that Lord Ethelwode always left his study at this time, and that he would be highly displeased at his guest's absence from the drawing-room, when he honoured it with his presence. They were, therefore, obliged to content themselves with one more lingering look at the setting planet, and then turned their steps towards the castle.

The hissing of the urn, Lady Ethelwode's lan-

guid whine, and her husband's harsh tones, struck discordantly on their ears, after the deep stillness of the scene they had left, and Edward rejoiced, when Egbert, having speedily drank his tea, urgently requested his sister to sing him "one song, only one song," before he went to bed. Even if her singing were not good, it must be infinitely preferable to such sounds as those. But the first notes of Ellen's song at once startled him into the conviction that few sounds on earth could be compared to those full liquid tones, which gave to each word of the old and hackneyed ballad a freshness and a truth, which made the listener's heart follow every changing feeling which they expressed.

Long after Egbert was gone to bed, Edward was still sitting by Ellen's harp, echoing his request of "one song, only one song more before I go;" and it was not till Lady Ethelwode's snore became audible, even through the full chords, and the loud chimes of the castle clock roused him from his trance, that he reluctantly rose to depart. As he walked home he felt that, if he wished to retain his present calm feelings towards Ellen, and the mastery of his sober reason, he must not often expose himself to the witchery of her song, watching the while every change in that eloquent countenance!

CHAPTER XII.

"Began to bend down his admiring eyes
On all her touching looks and qualities,
Turning their shapely sweetness every way,
Till 'twas his food and habit day by day."

LEIGH HUNT.

"*Her* whole heart, and soul, and life, were *his*, but never had *she* named it Love; existence was all a Feeling, not yet shaped into a Thought."

CARLYLE.

The next Sunday Edward was to preach for the first time at Ethelwode. The friends who had known him from a boy, were very anxious to hear him and judge for themselves how far the reputation he had acquired at Oxford was well deserved. Sir Charles Conway, Reginald, and Louisa, were, therefore, as much disappointed as Ellen, when the torrents of rain which fell in the morning precluded all possibility of going to church. In the afternoon, however, the weather cleared up, and Ellen met the Oaklands' party at the churchyard gate.

"Alone, Ellen?" said Louisa, as they exchanged greetings.

"Yes; mamma, you know, cannot endure the heat and fatigue of church, and Lord Ethelwode would not infringe his invariable rule of never going to afternoon service, even to hear Mr. Annesley preach."

"And you walked here by yourself?" said Minna. "You country damsels are wonderfully bold; I should be frightened out of my wits at being obliged even to cross a street alone."

"I have not done much more than that to-day," answered Ellen, smiling, "as the park gates are not fifty yards from the church, and there is nothing to be afraid of in our quiet neighbourhood, unless it be the deer in the park, and they are great friends of mine. However, if there had been any risk to run, I should have braved it to-day, as I am very anxious to hear Mr. Annesley."

"This Mr. Annesley's preaching seems to fill every body's head," said St. John, rather impatiently; "I hope he will be worth hearing; after all, though, if the man had real talent, I should think he would not be fool enough to bury it in such a place as this."

"*The man*, as you are pleased to call Mr. Annesley," said Reginald, reddening with anger, "is my intimate friend, and I can vouch for his talents, which, perhaps, he considers as usefully

and actively employed amongst his fellow-creatures in a village, as in a city."

"And we," added Louisa, in a tone of cold sarcasm, more cutting to St. John than all Reginald's displeasure, "we, who form a part of his congregation, have reason to be highly flattered by Mr. St. John's opinion, that we are unworthy of the talents of a good preacher."

"I cry you mercy!" exclaimed St. John, concealing his vexation under a tone of irony. "Had I known Mr. Annesley was the idol of Ethelwode, far would it have been from me to breathe a doubt of his infallibility. I shall be wiser in future."

Ellen and Reginald looked indignant, and Louisa turned away in displeasure. The stopping of the church-bell warned them that they had no time for further remarks, and they hurried into the sacred edifice with feelings ruffled by what had passed, into a state very unfitted to the purpose which called them there.

Mr. Allen's venerable aspect and impressive manner as he read the service soon had their effect in subduing the jarring discord. St. John, indeed, experienced a slight return of irritation, as he saw all eyes turn towards Edward as he mounted into the pulpit, and the attitude of deep attention with which his first words were waited for; but even he felt his prepossessions

vanish as he marked Edward's manly unaffected bearing, and listened to his simple but forcible address.

Annesley's preaching was exactly what Reginald had expected from him, and his other friends had wished it might be. His language was perfectly plain, and logical in its conciseness and clearness. There was no hesitation or nervousness in his manner : he spoke nobly and earnestly, as one who feels that his mission is a high one, and whose whole soul is bent on fulfilling it worthily ; it was this which gave to his preaching the character of eloquence. His delivery was made more impressive by the perfect intonation of his full and well-modulated voice, and the graceful action, which seemed the natural involuntary expression of the inward workings of his mind.

The little church was hushed into breathless silence as he spoke. Even the worldly Montagues felt the spell, and St. John, who had come to scoff, was forced to listen with the same reverence and attention as Louisa and her father. There were others more strongly moved ; and it was perhaps fortunate, for the young preacher's composure, that he could not see the tears which rolled over his aged grandmother's cheeks—tears of deep joy, at finding her dearest hopes thus realised ; or Ellen's face, as she leaned forward

to listen, her whole soul seeming to hang upon his words, and her countenance changing with each change in his voice. When the party met again outside the church-door, the feelings with which they had entered it were forgotten, and the subdued and serious tone of the most frivolous amongst them bore the strongest testimony to the preacher's power.

The Oaklands' party turned their steps at once towards home; but Ellen lingered awhile in the churchyard, to speak to Mrs. Allen. She was soon joined by the old lady and her grandson.

"We were speaking, the other night," said the latter, "of the good which some minds work for themselves out of trial and affliction. If you like to accompany us on our walk, Miss Percival, I will show you some instances of this amongst the poor people my mother and I are going to visit."

Miss Percival gladly acceded to the proposal, and all three turned down into the village. Ellen had scarcely ever before entered the cottages of the poor. Her purse and her influence were always at the service of those whom Mrs. Allen recommended as proper objects for charity, but she shrank from nearer contact with the coarse and undisguised misery which saddened her heart. It was, therefore, with the interest of novelty that she now followed Mrs. Allen and

Edward into the lowly dwellings whither they led her, and it was with surprise and shame, that she found how true were Edward's words—how much of nobleness of mind, of faith and purity of heart, existed within them, giving to poverty and low station a dignity far beyond that which the most splendid outward trappings of existence can confer.

“I shall leave you here,” said Mrs. Allen, as, the last cottage being visited, they reached a lane which was a short cut to the park-gates, “and Edward will go with you, to see you safe home.”

Ellen protested against Mrs. Allen walking home alone, and said that she did not want any escort, as she was so near home. But Mrs. Allen insisted that, as she had kept her out so late, she must provide for her getting home in safety. She was only a few steps from the parsonage, whilst Ellen had nearly two miles to walk. As she was bent on having her own way, Ellen submitted; and having taken leave of her, accepted Edward's offered arm. The path they had taken led to the old oak, by the waterfall, which we mentioned before, and, as they reached it, they perceived Egbert making his way towards them, down the steep rocky brink of the chasm, through which the stream leapt from its upper channel into the pool below.

"Take care ! for Heaven's sake, take care !" she exclaimed, as she saw the boy springing carelessly from rock to rock.

A laugh was the only answer he returned to his sister's fears, and he waved his hat in the air as he prepared to take a wider leap than before. But the stone on which he alighted was slippery with spray—he lost his footing, and fell. Edward sprang forwards, and reached him just as the bushes, which had for a moment arrested his fall, were giving way under his weight ; in another moment he must have been plunged into the deep pool below.

He was so stunned, that it was not for some minutes after Edward had laid him on the grass, and Ellen had unfastened his collar and sprinkled his face with water, that he recovered his consciousness.

"I am better now," he said, at length ; "do not look so frightened, Ellen ; I am not killed, only a little bruised. If Mr. Annesley will just lift me up, I shall be able to walk home very well."

But the first attempt to put his foot to the ground convinced him that the injury he had received was, by no means, so trifling as he had imagined, and he was forced to allow Annesley to carry him. Ellen preceded them as quickly as she could, to give notice at the castle of what

had happened, and to despatch a messenger for the nearest surgeon.

Her first step was to seek Lord Ethelwode. He was in his library, as usual; and he looked up in angry surprise at her abrupt entrance. But his anger soon gave way, as she proceeded with her story, and there was something moving in the stern man's agony of fear, when he heard of his son's accident, and the danger he had run. His usual stateliness of demeanour, and even his presence of mind, utterly forsook him, and his hurried contradictory orders were so unintelligible, that Ellen was obliged to give the necessary directions herself; whilst he, with some of the servants, hastily went forth to meet Edward, and bring the sufferer to the castle.

The boy had fainted away with the pain, and, when Lord Ethelwode came up, he was lying in Edward's arms, pale and motionless.

"My God, he is dead!" exclaimed the father, as he bent over him and looked eagerly into his face. He staggered back against a tree, pale, and trembling in every limb.

It was some minutes before Edward could make him understand, through the stupor which had overtaken him, that Egbert had only fainted, and that there was no reason to fear a fatal result. The boy's own feeble voice, as he recovered his senses, did far more towards recalling

his father to himself than all Edward's efforts, and his joy was then almost as overpowering as his sorrow had been.

Every moment's delay was only increasing the poor child's suffering; and, as Annesley saw that Lord Ethelwode was incapable of giving the necessary directions, and that Egbert would faint again if not speedily relieved, he gently put the father aside, and placing the boy on the litter which had been brought, went with him to the castle, and saw him laid on his bed, resolving to remain with him till something like order was restored in the house, and he could leave him under better care than he was likely to meet with at present.

It was now time that Lady Ethelwode should be informed of what happened. The tumult in the castle had been heard even in the remote boudoir, and Mademoiselle Juliani was just leaving it to ascertain the cause of this unwonted disturbance when Ellen made her appearance.

"What is the matter, Ellen?" cried her mother, fretfully. "I am almost distracted with noise."

Ellen explained, briefly and calmly, the accident that had befallen Egbert; and begged her mother to be quiet, and not give way to needless alarm. But Lady Ethelwode would not listen to her assurances of Egbert's safety. She

was sure that he had broken a limb, that he was dying, that he would die; and, forgetting her usual languor, she hurried away to his room, where the village surgeon was now examining the injured limb. But the sight of her child lying on the bed, deadly pale, and with features contracted by pain, and his father leaning over him in speechless anxiety, as the surgeon felt every part of the limb, to ascertain where the injury had been received, was too much for her over-excited nerves; she went off into violent hysterics, and was carried away to her own apartment.

It was fortunate that Ellen retained her presence of mind, for Mademoiselle Juliani, terrified by Lady Ethelwode's hysterics, was helpless as a child, and was unable to attend upon her without the assistance of the servants. Ellen was, therefore, left almost alone, to do what was required in the sick room. Her energy seemed to rise with occasion for it, and she listened calmly, and obeyed quickly and quietly, the surgeon's directions, procured, herself, all that was wanted, soothed Egbert by her caresses, and, finally, succeeded in restoring order in the room. Edward watched her with a new feeling of admiration, and he thought he had never seen her look so beautiful before. The hurt was pronounced to be a violent sprain of the sinews of the right leg;

but it was not till this opinion was confirmed by the opinion of the two other surgeons, who had been sent for, and whose successive examinations prolonged poor Egbert's torture, that Lord Ethelwode could be persuaded that there really was no danger, and that care and quiet were all that were necessary to restore the sufferer to the perfect use of his limb.

But though he now resumed the calm stateliness of demeanour, which was habitual to him, there was none of his usual haughtiness in his manner; when Edward, having seen Egbert relieved by the fomentations Ellen was applying, according to the surgeon's directions, and satisfied that he could be of no further use, came up to him to take his leave.

"You have saved my boy's life," said he, warmly shaking him by the hand, "and I shall never forget the deep debt of gratitude I owe you. From this time, Mr. Annesley, consider me as your warmest friend, and this house as your home, whenever you choose to make it so."

"Mr. Annesley, pray come again soon! Come and see me to-morrow!" exclaimed the weak voice of the sufferer.

Edward said he would certainly come; and, having thanked Lord Ethelwode for his cordial offers, and taken leave of Ellen, he hastened

home to the parsonage, where he found Mr. and Mrs. Allen anxiously wondering what could have detained him so late.

The next morning he went early to the castle, and found that Egbert had spent a tolerable night, and, though suffering much from occasional spasm, the surgeon had pronounced him better. There was every hope of his speedy recovery, if he could be kept perfectly quiet; but this was a matter of no small difficulty with a boy of such an ardent temperament, little accustomed to find amusement in any thing but active exertion. Lady Ethelwode, who had been persuaded at last that his cure was not hopeless, had offered to take Ellen's place in the sick room, whilst the latter lay down to take a few hours' rest, which she much needed, after sitting up all night with her brother. The *chaise-longue* was accordingly placed by Egbert's bed-side, and Lady Ethelwode addressed herself to the task of amusing the restless patient. But he was not to be amused by her; her languid tone, and perpetual intreaties that he would keep quiet, irritated him the more; and when the spasms came on, she could only tremble, and cry, and ring the bell for the servant to apply the fomentations, whilst she turned away, not to witness the distortion of his countenance caused by the pain.

Egbert longed for Ellen, with her bright smile

and light, skilful hand, and he was heartily glad when his mother declared that her nerves were unable to stand it any longer, and that she must give up the attempt to sit by Egbert and witness such dreadful suffering. Lord Ethelwode was almost as unskilful as his wife in the office of sick-nurse. He could watch for hours by his child's bed-side, marking every change in the boy's countenance, and he was ready to perform any service he required, but he could not lighten the weary time with talking; and his step was heavy, and the very touch of his unpractised hand made the sufferer shrink with agony. Poor Egbert was lying in this fretful and restless state, and Lord Ethelwode was walking up and down the room, miserable at being unable to do any thing for him, and half angry with Ellen for having, even an hour, left the task none seemed able to perform but herself, when Edward arrived. Never was any one more warmly welcomed.

"Oh! Mr. Annesley, I am so glad you are come!" cried the boy, starting up in his bed, and then falling back again with a groan, at the pain the movement had occasioned. "I am so tired, so very tired of lying here, with nothing to do."

"But why should you have nothing to do?" asked Edward, after he had returned Lord Ethelwode's statelier, but scarcely less joyful greeting.

Egbert could not conceive that there was any thing to be done, so long as he was confined to his room, away from his garden, his pony, and his canoe.

“ But books ; there are always books, and you can read as well in bed as out of it.”

Egbert did not care about books ; he had never found one that amused him, and he did not think there were any that could. He changed his mind, however, when Annesley brought him “ Frank,” and “ Harry and Lucy,” and beginning with reading to him, gradually led him to feel an interest in the different characters, and in their pursuits. Lord Ethelwode could scarcely recover from his astonishment, when he returned to the sick room, at finding Egbert reading intently, without a thought beyond his book. His opinion of Mr. Annesley rose still higher than before ; for any one who could effect such a miracle, as interesting Egbert in any quiet employment, must, he thought, possess powers nearly allied to magic, and he earnestly repeated his invitations to him, which were backed by Egbert’s entreaties, that he would come again, and come often.

Edward had the less reluctance in complying with this request, as he saw, that by coming, he relieved Ellen from some part of the fatiguing task of attending upon her brother, which other-

wise must have fallen entirely upon her. The presence of any one else in his room seemed rather to irritate Egbert than to give him pleasure. He would suffer none but his sister, or Annesley, to change his bandages, or apply the fomentations to his foot; and when he was tired with reading, and Ellen had sung to him till she could sing no more, he was not to be amused, or kept quiet, unless Mr. Annesley was there to talk to him. He could explain to him all he did not understand, in the scientific parts of "Harry and Lucy," and was ever ready to assist him in trying such of the experiments as were practicable under his present circumstances; and to answer all the inquiries which these experiments suggested, and lead his mind to a desire for more knowledge. Every time Edward left him, the boy repeated his urgent request of "Pray, come again soon;" and Edward, at last, came to consider his visit to the castle as part of the day's employment. He was equally welcome to every one there as to Egbert. Lord Ethelwode was grateful to him for his kindness to his son, and valued him also as one, whose antiquarian lore made him a peculiarly acceptable companion. Her ladyship liked him for keeping Egbert quiet, and saving her from any shadow of self-reproach which she might have felt at leaving the whole care of nursing him to

devolve upon Ellen, whilst Mademoiselle Juliani was thankful for the good humour her patroness was thus kept in ; and liked him for his constant consideration for herself, whom no one else thought it necessary to consider.

And Ellen ! what were *her* feelings towards him, as day after day brought him to share her labour of love, and taught her to know more intimately all the resources of his mind, all the beauty of his character ? Perhaps she could not have defined them herself, nor did she attempt it ; she only knew, that in his presence, she was perfectly happy ; and that, when he was away, the sunshine seemed to have lost its splendour, the air its freshness, the scenery its beauty, and all things became “weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable” to her, till he returned to give them an interest and a charm. She only felt that the deep murmur of the sea, and the low sweet sounds of Nature, instinct with life, had no music when compared with Edward’s voice, as she listened to his rich and varied conversation.

She never asked herself *why* she felt this : she yielded to the influence which made life assume a new aspect to her, making all the years that had gone before seem like a dull and indistinct dream, without seeking to analyse the reason of the change, without a thought of its consequences. The present hour, with its

freight of happiness, was enough for her, and she looked not beyond. Neither did she attempt to scrutinize more carefully Edward's feelings towards herself. She would, probably, have laughed, had any one told her that he loved her, for the idea of a lover was identified in her mind with that of a devoted slave, neglecting all the common duties of life in the pursuit of the object of his passion, and only speaking, to convey, in honeyed words, the expression of his rapturous devotion.

Nothing could be more different from all this than Edward's demeanour towards her. No entreaty of hers had ever had power to make him neglect the slightest particle of what he looked upon as his duty; and she had often known him refuse an invitation to the castle, and even resist the temptation of a *tête-à-tête* ramble with her, to spend hours watching by a pauper's sick bed, or attending to the children in the village-school. His manner, though peculiarly gentle to her, was always calm and collected, and no word of flattery or compliment had ever passed his lips, whilst, on the contrary, if occasion offered, he sometimes told her very uncompromising, and even humiliating truths. In his presence she forgot that she was beautiful, and only felt conscious of her inferiority to him. Had she, on the other hand, been asked if she

loved him, she would, probably, have answered in the words of Helena;—

“ It were all one,
That I should love some bright particular star,
And think to wed it, he is so above me ;”

her weaker nature leant upon his, and clung to him almost instinctively, as the fragile creeper seeks and twines itself round the nearest support; and so child-like, so undoubting was her trust, that she dreamt not of the possibility of her stay being riven from her.

It was the very simplicity and frankness which this unconsciousness of the nature of her own feelings gave to her manner, which helped to deceive Edward, as to them and his own also.

Day after day he watched her in the performance of the most touching of woman's cares,—soothing the weary hours of a sick chamber, anticipating every wish, ministering to every want with untiring gentleness. Day after day he exposed himself to the seduction of that most dangerous and subtle flattery, from a young and lovely woman;—her evident reverence for him, her unhesitating deference to his opinions, her ready submission to his judgment, and her eagerness in following out the plans which they made together for her instruction;—still he had no thought of love.

Ellen, the creature of impulse, impassioned,

undisciplined, uncultivated, was utterly unlike the *beau-ideal* he had formed to himself of the woman he *could* love; and it was not until circumstances roused him from his self-delusion, and startled him into a consciousness of his own feelings, that he became aware that he regarded Ellen with any other than brotherly interest and affection.

CHAPTER XIII.

"He of wide blooming youth's fair flower possest,
Owns the vain thoughts—the heart that cannot rest."

Lady Frances Montague and her daughters had intended taking their departure immediately after the ball, but poor Fanny was discovered to have caught a cold that night, and it rapidly grew so much worse as to preclude all thoughts of her moving for some time to come. Lady Frances was loud in her lamentations over her poor child's sufferings, and the evil which might ensue to her voice. She spoke eloquently of her own sensitive feelings, which were too acute to allow her to remain in the room whilst the village apothecary was bleeding Fanny; and she left her to the care of her maid and Mr. Johnson, and went in search of Louisa, to sympathize with her sufferings.

"I am afraid I do not understand that kind of feeling," said Louisa, bluntly, and she left her aunt, and ran up stairs to see whether she could be of any assistance in the sick-room.

Arthur St. John heartily wished Lady Frances Montague at the devil for disturbing Louisa from her drawing. He had hoped to spend the whole morning with her in quiet, as the other gentlemen were out riding. Had he known that the drawing she was finishing was for Reginald, he would not, perhaps, have watched its progress with so much complacency.

As no evil effects were apprehended from poor Fanny's cold, further than a tedious confinement to her room, Sir Charles did not think it necessary to postpone a dinner-party, which had been arranged some time before.

"I do not feel very fit for society," sighed Lady Frances, when he proposed it; "though dear Fanny's illness is really nothing, I am so easily alarmed that I suffer more than any one could imagine."

"If you would like better not to come down, my dear Frances," said Sir Charles, kindly, "pray do not stand upon any ceremony. We shall be sorry to lose the pleasure of your society, but—"

"My dear brother, you are very kind, but I must not allow myself to give way. My feelings are so absurdly sensitive already, I must restrain them; I consider it quite a duty to myself: besides, I could be of no use to poor dear Fanny,

you know; and if I sat with her, she would be sure to talk, which is the worst thing in the world for her; so I will come down. I think I may be of some assistance to dear Louisa, as you have so large a party."

Thus amiably resolved on putting a constraint upon her feelings, and acting up to her sense of duty, Lady Frances made her appearance in due time in the drawing-room, prepared to give Louisa the benefit of her greater experience in the usages of society. But Louisa, with her self-possession and quiet dignity of manner, seemed to stand little in need of her assistance, and could not be made to look grateful for her aunt's sacrifice of feeling. Lady Frances was obliged, therefore, to be satisfied with being no more than any other visiter.

Ellen and her stately stepfather were amongst the guests. Lady Ethelwode was to have accompanied them, but was still too much fatigued with her exertions on the night of the ball to venture out, and it was generally supposed that she would not leave her *chaise-longue* under another month at least.

All eyes were turned on Ellen as she entered the room, and, as she took her seat beside Louisa, she was immediately surrounded by the gentlemen, with the exception of St. John, who was intent on watching his opportunity for leading

Louisa into dinner, if possible, or at least to seize a place by her side. Of the first he had no chance, for Lord Ethelwode, as the man of highest rank in the room, naturally took possession of his young hostess; and St. John was obliged, in obedience to an intimation from her, to offer his arm to Mrs. Fanshaw. Ellen fell to Reginald's share; and Minna, finding herself on the point of becoming a prey to little, fat, fussy Mr. Fanshaw, made the best use of her shortsightedness; and, apparently, entirely overlooking the little man, whose small arm was extended with a half bow and smile, she took that of tall Mr. Hope, who, though a younger son, did very well, *faute de mieux*, to flirt with in the country, and quietly walked away, leaving Mr. Fanshaw standing in the middle of the room, with his arm still extended, apparently petrified by this unheard of disregard to the dignity of Thomas Fanshaw, Esq., of Fanshaw Hall.

He was yet destined to another blow; for when he entered the dining-room, and advanced to take his place beside Louisa, in right of his being (in his own estimation) the second man in the company, St. John forestalled him by a skilful manœuvre, and took possession himself of the coveted seat, leaving him no alternative but to go much lower down, to the only vacant place

remaining, beside Miss Montague's tall cavalier, whom he regarded with unmingled detestation.

There are some topics of conversation which never fail, any more than the soup and the fish at a dinner party. Wine and politics, the clubs in London, the crops in the country, shooting or hunting, according to the season, varied by interesting remarks on the weather of the last week, and bold prophecies on the weather of the week to come — all these are standing dishes, staple articles of tabletalk. But few are the parties where any subjects of greater interest become the topics of general conversation, or, in fact, where there is any general conversation at all. The various *tête-à-têtes* round the table may make pleasant discourse for their own private benefit, but a really animated conversation amongst the whole party is very rare.

It requires a master-spirit to start the subject, and keep up the ball; to draw out the timid or the reserved, who are afraid of the sound of their own voices, when so many ears must hear; to restrain the prolix, who would engross all the talk to themselves, and merge conversation into a discourse; to avoid equally the confusion of many speakers at once, or the sudden and dead silence which falls like an extinguisher upon the flame of wit and merriment, often hopelessly putting it out to be no more rekindled. But of

all the dangers which threaten a general conversation, none is more fatal or so difficult to avert as any tendency to flirtation — or, worse still, serious love-making amongst the younger ladies and gentlemen of the party ; and this was the rock on which, in spite of all Sir Charles's efforts — and few could be better fitted for the task—general conversation split this day at Oaklands.

St. John and Reginald were both remarkable for their conversational powers ; but St. John was intent on making use of his to engross Louisa's attention as much as her sense of courtesy to her other guests would allow ; and Reginald was too uncomfortably occupied in watching their animated discourse, and the changes of Louisa's eloquent countenance, to think of exerting himself for the benefit of society in general. Ellen sat in silence by his side, wondering what could have made her think that Mr. Talbot was an agreeable man when he was last at Oaklands, and wishing that Edward Annesley had been in his place.

Minna and Mr. Hope had neither eyes, ears, nor words for any one but themselves, and the young lady's convenient shortsightedness enabled her to be happily unconscious of all her mother's winks and frowns, as she sat opposite to her, watching, in an agony of alarm, the rapid pro-

gress of her daughter's flirtation with a younger son. Others, who had no flirtation of their own, and no interest in watching other people's, were equally indisposed to second Sir Charles's attempts to make the conversation general.

Lord Ethelwode sat in stately silence, feeling all the time rather indignant that Louisa should give so much of her attention to Mr. St. John, and leave him to the alternative of remaining silent, or talking to his other neighbour, Mr. Dickson, who had made a large fortune in trade, and had just bought a fine old place in the neighbourhood. The baron wondered, as he discussed his venison in silence, what could possess a man of Sir Charles's good breeding and knowledge of the world to ask *him* to meet such people. On the other hand, Mrs. Fanshaw had been making strong but ineffectual endeavours to secure to herself some portion of St. John's attention. She had several times attempted to edge herself into the conversation he was holding with Louisa, by bending forward with, "What is that you are saying, Miss Conway?" "Who are you talking of, Mr. St. John?" But, finding that every attempt was unheeded, or answered by, "I beg your pardon, I was speaking to Miss Conway," she drew herself up with her stateliest air, and looked round to see whether there was not any one near on whom to bestow her conver-

sation, who would appreciate it more than her heedless neighbours. Her choice instantly lighted upon Lord Ethelwode, who evidently was as little pleased with their proceedings as herself; so, leaning forward with a gracious smile, she addressed him across the table.

"By the way, Lord Ethelwode, have you seen the prospectus of Mr. What's-his-name's work — views of the noblemen and gentlemen's seats in — shire? I suppose, of course, you are a subscriber."

"I never heard of the man or his work before," answered Lord Ethelwode, looking rather astonished that Mrs. Fanshaw should think of addressing *him* in such a familiar manner.

"Ah! you will hear of him very soon, then. He was at Fanshaw Hall this morning. He was quite struck with the place, and said the view of it should be in his first number, as he was sure it would attract a great many people. I told him to go to the castle, and I have no doubt that you will see him there as soon as he has done at the hall."

"He had better save himself the trouble," replied his lordship, sarcastically. "Amongst the class of people for whom his work seems designed, and whom he means to attract by views of Fanshaw Hall, Ethelwode Castle would find little favour."

“ Oh ! I assure you, you are mistaken. Every body must admire the castle, though, of course, as tastes differ so much, some may prefer the hall, as it is so much lighter and more cheerful. The castle certainly is a *leetle* gloomy,” continued she, seeing that Lord Ethelwode sat erect, apparently attentively listening, and with an expression of determined silence on his countenance ; “ it always reminds me of ‘ the Mysteries of Udolpho.’ Indeed, my brother-in-law, Mr. Smith, who has lately returned from Italy, told me it was very like some of the old Italian castles or palaces ; it only wanted, he said, to have the moat filled up, and a terrace made along the front, with a few vases and statues, to make it perfect. I will bring Mr. Smith over, and introduce him to you the next time I come to Ethelwode. He is a man of so much taste, and understands the thing so well, I am sure you will find his suggestions worth attending to.”

All the blood of the Ethelwodes boiled up into the baron’s face as he listened to this speech.

He, baron of Ethelwode, and lineally descended from Alfred the Great, to be recommended to listen to the suggestions of a Mr. Smith, who could have no certainty of being lineally descended from any one at all besides Adam, for altering his ancestral castle, filling up the moat, which had proved an impregnable defence against

the whole power of three kings of England in three successive sieges, and replacing it by a garish terrace, decked, like a cit's box at Hampstead, with vases and statues! Fortunately for Mrs. Fanshaw, looks have *not* the power to annihilate, or her portly person would undoubtedly have dissolved into an airy nothing beneath the glance of the insulted descendant of Alfred. No such catastrophe ensued, however; and Louisa, who had witnessed the scene, and had with great difficulty restrained her own and St. John's inclination to laugh, now interposed to avert any more open ebullition of the wrath with which the baron was evidently choking.

"*Apropos* of alterations, Lord Ethelwode — you have been doing a great deal lately to the ruins on the island, have you not?"

"Yes," replied Lord Ethelwode, making a strong effort to master his indignation, and speak with his usual dignified equanimity. "I have been restoring, as much as possible, the western tower, and part of the cloister which had fallen in. I know that such restorations are against the taste of the times—most people would think the money better spent in building a mill or a manufactory — but I am one of those old-fashioned people who still remember that something great, and good, and noble existed before the nineteenth century; and within my grounds,

at least, the relics of that past shall be preserved and revered as they ought to be."

"I agree with you," said Louisa; "we are too apt in this utilitarian age to overlook the use of every thing that does not produce pounds, shillings, and pence—to think that what ministers to the highest faculties of the mind, reverence, and the love of the beautiful, is of lighter value than what ministers only to the wants of the body. It is well for us that there are some people, like you, bold enough, and disinterested enough to stem the torrent."

Lord Ethelwode's features relaxed from the expression of haughty indignation they had worn since Mrs. Fanshaw's attack, and he answered, with a smile:

"I wish there were more young ladies who looked on these things as you do, Miss Conway; we should hear less of reform, which is but another name for destroying every thing that is ancient and venerable."

This was an unsafe topic to enter upon, for Louisa was far from carrying her love of antiquity to ancient abuses and prejudices; she therefore hastened to bring back the conversation to less dangerous ground, and made some further inquiries as to the repairs he had been making in the island ruin.

"What is this ruin you are speaking of?"

asked St. John, who was growing impatient at Louisa's bestowing so much of her attention on any one but himself.

"It was formerly a monastery, and was under the jurisdiction of the prior of Ethelwode. The refractory monks at the abbey were imprisoned there, and I believe the dungeons which are still extant have witnessed many a scene worthy of the inquisition."

"Are you speaking of the ruin in the island?" asked Ellen, in her turn. "Really, Louisa, we must make an expedition there together some day, to see the monuments which have been lately discovered by the workmen in clearing out the rubbish from the chancel. Lord Ethelwode says they are finer than any which have hitherto been laid open."

Louisa was quite ready for such an expedition; and, in the evening, when the strangers of the party were gone, the subject was again recurred to. As it then appeared that both Reginald and St. John were eager to be allowed to join in the excursion, and that Minna thought a party of any kind would be a charming diversion from the usual monotony of a country life, it was quickly agreed that they should all go over together to the island in Sir Charles's yacht, and spend a day there, provided Lord Ethelwode had no objection to such an invasion

of his territories. Lord Ethelwode came forward at once with a gracious assurance that they were not only welcome to go, but that he should be happy to be himself their cicerone among the ruins. It only remained therefore to fix the day; this must depend, Sir Charles said, on the state of the yacht, which had not been used this year, and might require repair; and Reginald engaged to go down to the creek next morning, to make the necessary inquiry into her condition, and at the same time to ask Edward Annesley to join their party—he and Mr. Hope, whom Minna thought it would be uncivil to exclude, after he had partly heard the matter arranged, being the only additions that were to be made to their party.

Edward was so immersed in his books and papers when Reginald called upon him the next morning, that it was not till his friend laid his hand on his shoulder that he became aware of his presence.

“This room, with its litter of books and papers, its stillness and subdued light, reminds me of our college rooms,” said Reginald, looking round whilst his friend removed some ponderous folios to make a place for him to sit down. “I look with pleasure, and almost with regret, to those days now, though at the time I did not

value their privileges, and only pined to leave them for the active labours of life."

"And thereby proving," replied Edward, "the truth of the poet's saying :

" ' Man never is, but always to be blest. '

I did not suspect you, however, whose career has hitherto been so prosperous, not to say brilliant, of looking back with regret to those quiet days."

"Quiet, yes, it is that which makes me regret them : theirs was the communion of minds as yet unscathed by passion, knowing nothing of the strife of existence, of the thousand sordid cares and thoughts which will be forced upon them in the world, dimming all their high and noble aspirations, till they almost forget that they ever proposed to themselves a higher goal than the earth-worms they see crawling along around them. Such quiet once lost can never be regained."

"True; the quiet of ignorance and inexperience once lost is lost for ever; but we may attain a better in its stead. We may attain the peace of a mind which has thoroughly looked into both the realities and the semblances of life, and has found the true value of each, which has mastered its own passions, and has read enough of the mystery of human existence to

discover where harmony and order lie concealed beneath its jarring elements, and which, by the light of this inward sunshine, presses onwards to its goal with a clear eye and unwavering step."

"Have you already attained such peace as this?" asked Reginald, looking with momentary envy on his friend's calm and noble countenance.

"No, indeed; but my trial of active life has hitherto been so uneventful, that I have as yet scarcely lost the first peace of ignorance."

"Your life seems, indeed, quiet enough," said Reginald. "Are you not afraid of getting wearied by its monotony? Do you never regret your choice of a profession, now that you know by actual experience how thankless and ill-repaid is the toil of a country clergyman?"

"My experience of a country clergyman's life has not been of such a forbidden nature as you represent it," replied Edward, smiling. "It is no thankless toil, in my opinion, to sow the seeds of knowledge and virtue in human hearts; to bring the light of God's truth to shine in minds where it never shone before; and, though the bread seems now cast in vain upon the waters, it will return after many days, if we have patience to wait for it."

"Yes; but do you never wish for a more extensive and active sphere of life than this narrow village? It seems to me that the mind

must stagnate in a place where there is so little motive for exertion, and where it is perpetually forced to lower itself, so as to be on a level with the coarse, uncultivated understandings it has to deal with."

"But I do not see the necessity of this debasement of mind. My task is to raise those around me to my level, not to descend to theirs; high thoughts can be expressed in language intelligible to the poorest labourer. As to a more extended or public sphere of action, you know I never had a very stirring disposition; and I had rather watch the course of events from a distance, and speculate on their issues, than be an actor in them myself. My path may seem obscure and my work mean in the eyes of the world, but to those who really reverence their human nature, nothing is mean or little which has the good of man for its object; and, viewed in this light, the vocation of the most obscure parish priest is not less noble than that of the statesman or philosopher."

"You have successfully vindicated your choice," said Reginald; "I was too worldly, too ambitious to see it in that light, and, though I acknowledge its real greatness, I still feel that I could not be satisfied with such a vocation. I have a superabundance of restless energy which

I must find some outward employment for, lest my mind, like Sir Hudibras's sword, should

“‘ Eat into itself, for lack
Of something else to hew and hack.’”

“ Do not let your energy grow morbid in its restlessness,” said Edward, looking anxiously at his friend, who was pacing up and down the room as he spoke, as if he already felt its limits too confined for him. “ Do not let your ambition fall short of the high aim you proposed to yourself when you started in the race. Do not let the world make you forget your early faith in the truth that here below the highest should be as a servant, and that the post of honour is the foremost place in the great conflict between good and evil. When we parted at college to enter our different careers, it was this belief which made us feel that, however widely asunder our lots were cast, we were labourers in the same cause, striving towards the goal. Let not either of us be unfaithful to it.”

He spoke earnestly, and, as Reginald listened to him, he gradually slackened his pace, and at length came and stood in silence beside his friend.

“ I will not be unfaithful to it,” said he, as Edward ceased speaking, “ though of late I have often needed such a warning as this, to keep it

in mind. There are times when my faith is darkened, and the goal so obscured as to be well nigh invisible — at those times, I will strive to remember your words. And now," added he, in a lighter tone, after a moment's silence, "I may as well tell you the errand which brought me here."

The errand was soon told; and Edward, having readily agreed to make one of the party to the island, the young men walked down together to the creek, to examine into the state of the yacht.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ In the very hour of their great peril, a light
Flashed o’er their hearts: and then they knew
They loved.”

Reginald’s report of the state of the yacht having proved favourable, it was agreed on all hands, that the sooner a day was fixed for the pic-nic the better. Louisa alone proposed that the party should be deferred till Fanny, who was still confined to her room, should be able to join them, but the proposal was instantly overruled by the multitude of objections which presented themselves to any delay. St. John pleaded that he should be obliged very shortly to quit Oaklands, his leave of absence being nearly expired. Reginald might receive any day orders from the Foreign Office, for instant departure from England. The Montagues’ visit was drawing to a close, and finally, the changing leaves of the beeches gave warning that no pleasure which depended on warm, bright weather, could be safely delayed at this season.

There was notwithstanding such a host of ar-

guments, and poor Fanny was obliged to submit to the disappointment, and find as much comfort as she could in the thought, that even had she been well, nothing could be more injurious to her voice, than the damp of the sea air after sunset. Lady Frances lamented bitterly over her poor child's disappointment, and said it would entirely spoil her pleasure to think of the long, lonely day she would spend ; she should wish herself with her a thousand times.

"Would you prefer staying with her?" said Louisa. "Papa and Lord Ethelwode will do very well as chaperons ; therefore you need not feel bound to sacrifice your own feelings on our account."

"Oh, my dear Louisa, I could not think of staying ; I could not let Minna go on the water without me ; if any thing were to happen, I should never forgive myself. Besides, Fanny would be miserable if I were to give up going on her account, dear, unselfish girl as she is ; she would rather, a thousand times, stay alone ; and as good Mrs. Allen has promised to look in upon her, and she has James's new novel to read, I shall be more comfortable about her, though it is certainly a hard thing to have one's feelings so divided."

Everybody was satisfied that whatever Lady Frances's feelings might be, she did not mean

them to prevent her making one of the boating-party, so no more was said on the subject. Lady Ethelwode, of course, could not go on any expedition which required so much exertion; sight-seeing had always been her abhorrence, and a picnic seemed to her a vast deal of unnecessary trouble, for no other purpose than eating one's dinner in the most uncomfortable manner possible. Mademoiselle Juliani was obliged to remain with her, so that the party from Ethelwode consisted only of Lord Ethelwode, Ellen, and Egbert, who was now perfectly recovered; Edward Annesley and Mr. Hope were to join them at the general *rendezvous* on the beach, where they were to embark.

The weather proved most auspicious. It was one of those still, sunny days, peculiar to an English autumn. The busy hum of summer life no longer stirred in the air, but it was sweet with the scent of the woods, which were already tinged with their rich autumn hues. Every feature of the scenery—rocks, hills, and wooded banks—stood out in well-defined outline from the pale fleecy sky; and the lowing of the cattle, or the ploughman's whistle, came through the still air, clear and distinct to the ear, from a great distance. A light breeze curled on the water—so light that it scarcely filled the cutter's top-sail, as she lay at her moorings, her sails set,

and ready to let slip the moment the party came on board.

They did not get there without some difficulty. Lady Frances had at first declared that no earthly power should induce her to set foot in the cutter's boat, which came to fetch them. They must get a larger boat for her: she could not, she would not go in such a cockle-shell. There was no larger boat to be had, however, as Sir Charles informed her, and she must choose between going in the cockle-shell, or remaining behind.

"But you know I cannot stay behind," replied she; "I must go."

Nobody saw the necessity, so nobody assented.

"I cannot let Minna go alone. Oh dear! I know the boat will upset!—how dreadful! And poor dear Fanny, left there alone, too—I ought perhaps to have stayed with her." (They were by this time some distance from the shore.) "If I had known what I should have to go through, I never should have attempted it. But it is so difficult, when one has so many claims upon one, to decide what it is best to do."

Lady Frances's conscientious distress seemed, however, to excite no feeling of compassion amongst her companions, who were, one and all, in the brightest of moods, and little inclined to sympathize in her ill-timed complaining. Even her courteous brother-in-law turned away from

her to talk to Lord Ethelwode. It was useless to attempt to move such impassable beings, so she put on a look of painful resignation and sate in silence, only screaming each time a rather stronger ripple on the wave caused the boat to roll a little. Once, as they were going to cross the bows of a fishing-smack under sail, she seized the yoke-lines in Sir Charles Conway's hand, but he shook her off with a sternness so unlike his usual demeanour, bidding her be quiet and rational, unless she wished to drown herself and the whole party, that she shrank back, actually abashed, and did not again stir or speak, till they got alongside the yacht.

It was now quite calm, and the mainsail flapped lazily against the boom as the tide carried the little vessel slowly on her way. Even Lady Frances could find no cause of fear in the glassy sea and gliding motion, and could join in the conversation of the others—interrupting it, however, every five minutes, to intreat Minna to keep down her green veil.

“Boating parties were such dreadful things for complexions. Minna's skin, too, was so very fair—she would not be fit to be seen after exposure to such a hot sun and on the salt water, too.”

Minna put down her veil; but not before she had turned to Mr. Hope, and appealed to him,

with her sweetest smile, "whether she really was not fit to be seen?" and Mr. Hope answered, as she expected, with a look that said, "that, under any circumstances, she would always be beautiful in his eyes." The day's flirtation having thus successfully begun, Minna and Mr. Hope sate down somewhat apart from the rest, and continued a whispered conversation, in spite of the angry looks which Lady Frances occasionally cast at her daughter, for wasting her time so unprofitably upon a younger son.

Louisa and the rest of the party, except Egbert, who was diligently employed in learning from one of the sailors the names of all the ropes, gathered into a group and kept up a lively conversation, interrupted occasionally by exclamations at the beauty of the coast as it opened out before them, when they had crept round the headland which inclosed the little bay. Then, when the sleepy influence of the sunny calm began to be felt in the slackening of the conversation, Minna and Mr. Hope were called from their *tête-à-tête*, to join in the games which Sir Charles Conway proposed to enliven the party.

There were shouts of laughter when the grave Lord Ethelwode was seated on the stool of repentance and accused of not having a proper regard for his old baronial castle, and louder shouts still, when, in the game of forfeits, St.

John, having been condemned to bow to the wisest, kneel to the prettiest, and kiss the hand of the one he loved best, he bent his head to the ground before Lady Frances, knelt with impassioned gesture before the rough, weather-beaten, old coxswain, and devoutly kissed his own white hand; and Mr. Hope found time, in the midst of his laughter, to assure Minna that if such a doom had been awarded to *him*, he should not have had to move beyond his present place to render this triple homage to one person only. There was laughter again when Sir Charles Conway was called upon to redeem his forfeit by singing a song; but he was allowed to make over his task to Ellen, who fulfilled it so much to every body's satisfaction, that the forfeits were forgotten by the time the song was ended, and there was a general cry for another song, and then another, and another, till any one's voice and memory but Ellen's must have been exhausted.

"Your singing has brought the breeze, Ellen," said Sir Charles. "Look, how fast it is coming over the water."

Minna could not understand how any one could *see* a breeze, and Sir Charles pointed out to her the line of deep, blue water, just curled into a ripple, now rapidly advancing towards the cutter's quarter.

In a moment Minna could feel it herself; the sails filled; and the enlivening sound of the water, as the cutter dashed it from her bows, replaced the sleepy flapping of the sails. The little vessel now moved rapidly on; the buz of conversation grew more animated, and exclamations of delight burst forth from each of the party, as they passed headland after headland, and each bend of the shore presented a new beauty in the scenery.

The breeze freshened as they stood out from the coast towards the island, which was the object of their expedition, and, as the yacht leant over to it, and sent the spray flying over the deck, Lady Frances's sentimental effusions of admiration at the beauties of nature turned into exclamations of alarm.

"Good heavens, it is coming on to blow a gale! Pray, Sir Charles, let us turn back immediately, I cannot think of going on in such weather as this. Oh! we shall be drowned!" she screamed, as a few drops of spray fell on her face.

"No fear of that," said Sir Charles, laughing, "you will only get a little wet with the spray."

"A little wet, indeed! I am drenched already. Minna, come and sit by me; your skin will never recover the salt water. Look how dreadfully we are leaning over; I know we must

be upset in a minute ; I will not go on ; why did not I stay with my poor darling Fanny ? I insist upon being let out, Sir Charles ; let me out, I will not stay to be drowned ; Minna shall not stay either. For Heaven's sake, let us out !"

St. John jumped up, and opened the gangway.

"Allow me to hand your ladyship out," said he, offering his arm with grave politeness. Everybody smiled as Lady Frances turned angrily away, and the smile changed into a laugh, when she assured them that it was no laughing matter.

"Will you go down into the cabin ?" said Sir Charles at last, wishing to avoid any further exposure of his sister-in-law's folly ; "you will be quite safe, and more comfortable there than on deck, whilst the spray is flying about."

"Yes, I think I will go down. What, are you all going to stay on deck, and leave me in the cabin alone ? It is very hard upon me that I am to be shut out of all the pleasure of the day, and to stay by myself in this hot cabin. Minna, *you* had better come with me ; I am sure you will find it much pleasanter than ruining your complexion with that dreadful salt water. Now pray don't pretend to be fearless and masculine, like Louisa, and affect not to care about your appearance. I can assure you, your femi-

nine looks are not at all suited to that sort of thing, so come down with me."

There was no disobeying this peremptory summons, and Minna was reluctantly obliged to allow Mr. Hope to assist her down the companion ladder. He would have stayed with her in the cabin, but Lady Frances gave him such broad intimations of his presence not being acceptable, that he could be deaf and blind no longer, and was forced to leave the mother and daughter to themselves.

"Really, Minna," exclaimed the former, as soon as the gentleman was gone, "you make yourself so conspicuous with that man, I cannot bear to see it. I made you come down on purpose to take you out of his way. What can you mean by encouraging him to dangle after you in this manner?"

"Nothing at all," answered Minna, coolly; "except making the time pass as pleasantly as I can. Mr. Hope prefers my society to that of others, and I do not see why I am to *snub* him for his good taste."

"But other people will not treat it so lightly as you do; you drive away other men, by giving your attention so exclusively to one. There is Mr. St. John, for instance; a man of large property, and who will inherit Oaklands; if you had taken half as much trouble to attract him, you

know he would have been as devoted to you, as he now is to Louisa. It is so provoking to see you throw yourself away in that unprofitable manner, and Louisa quietly slipping in to carry off the prize you might have won."

"I beg your pardon, mamma, I never had any chance with Mr. St. John. He was taken at once by Louisa's oddity, so it was not worth while wasting time upon him."

"But even Reginald Talbot would be better than Mr. Hope. He is a rising man, and will, perhaps, turn out something good. However, go your own way, Minna, only remember that you have not a shilling in the world, and, if you marry a younger son, you will bitterly repent your folly before the honeymoon is over."

"Pray do not be alarmed, mamma," exclaimed the young lady, laughing, "I have no thoughts of marrying Mr. Hope—only of flirting with him *faute de mieux*—whilst we stay in this stupid place. As we are forced for economy's sake to vegetate here two months in the year, do let me enjoy what little pleasure I can find to make it endurable."

Lady Frances was forced to confess that this was a powerful argument; still, she begged Minna, if she must flirt with Mr. Hope, not to make it so very conspicuous, and to give him as

little encouragement as possible—"younger sons were so very presumptuous! He might fancy..."

But here she was interrupted by the entrance of the younger son in question, who came to inform them that they were very near the island, and that the deck was now perfectly dry.

Minna jumped up, and, notwithstanding her mother's signs and frowns, accepted his arm to go on deck again. Lady Frances followed with a deep sigh at her daughter's wilful neglect of her prudent advice, and in a few minutes more the whole party landed on the smooth yellow beach of the little island.

The first thing to be done was, of course, to find a good place to dine in. Lady Frances and Lord Ethelwode strongly inclined to the neighbouring farm-house, but the rest were all for dining in the open air—the fresh grass and the shade of one of those broad oaks would be so much pleasanter than the close room at the farm. As they had numbers on their side, they carried the point; and a mossy spot, beneath a clump of old trees in sight of the sea, was chosen as the banquet-room. This important point being settled, the whole party proceeded, under Lord Ethelwode's guidance, to visit the ruin, which was the ostensible object of the expedition.

Lord Ethelwode assumed his stateliest demeanour and his gravest tone as he led them

over the remains of the magnificent monastery which had been built and endowed by one of his ancestors, and whose abbots had been chosen, generation after generation, from the younger branches of the house of Ethelwode. It was still the burying-place of the family; and he pointed out, with delighted pride, the richly-carved monuments of the knights and barons which adorned the aisle of the gothic chapel, the only part of the monastery which was still uninjured. Louisa and her father, who were both fond of every relic of the olden time, listened with eager interest to his legends of the warriors and priests that lay beneath, and to his details of all he proposed to do to preserve their monuments from any further decay; but Minna soon got tired of poring over half-effaced inscriptions, and moralizing over tombstones and ruined walls; and she watched her opportunity, whilst her mother was expatiating to Sir Charles upon her love for ruins, to steal away from the group.

Mr. Hope, as she expected, soon followed her; and, as he perfectly agreed with her that a ramble in the woods would be much pleasanter than listening to the tiresome harangues of the noble baron, they struck off into a path which led in an opposite direction from the ruins. It was exactly the path for such a *tête-à-tête*, only just

wide enough to admit two, and sufficiently tangled and difficult to afford the gentleman numberless opportunities of offering his assistance to his companion, now in pushing aside the branches which overhung it, now in lifting her over a narrow brook, which she was almost too timid to venture to cross on the stepping-stones, now in disentangling her veil from the brambles on either side.

Minna repaid his services with such sweet smiles and bright glances from beneath her long eyelashes, and talked so feelingly of the delight of living in such a spot as this, and of love in a cottage, and leant upon his arm with such winning and gentle confidence, that Mr. Hope felt persuaded that he was the person with whom she wished to share her solitude; and he seized the opportunity, whilst they were in the thickest and most romantic dell of the wood, to pour out his tale of devoted love, and to entreat her, as they could expect nothing but opposition from their parents, on both sides, to elope with him to Scotland, without delay.

Minna had certainly not expected such a serious *dénouement* to her fit of romance, but she showed no other signs of surprise than fixing her large blue eyes with a gaze of astonishment on Mr. Hope's impassioned countenance, as she quietly asked him, "on what he proposed they

should live after having taken so decided a step?"

"Live!" said Mr. Hope, rather staggered at this matter-of-fact reception of his passionate declaration—"why, I do not exactly know; but, with such love as our's, dearest," continued he, warming again, "we should not require much; even poverty would become delightful when endured with you. Your beauty, your excellence, are treasures far beyond the value of gold."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Minna, still in the same cool tone—"I have no doubt of my manifold perfections, or your's either, '*mais on ne fait pas des soupes de vertu ni des fricassées de talent dans ce monde,*' as the French lady said. Come, Mr. Hope, you have acted your part admirably; and as of course you are not in earnest, we may as well change the subject now to something else."

But Mr. Hope was in earnest—most sober earnest. Minna had given him constant and great encouragement, and she could not mean to disappoint so cruelly the hopes she had herself created.

"Really, Mr. Hope, I am very sorry, but, if you have chosen to draw such unreasonable conclusions from my manner, I cannot hold myself bound to realize them. You never could have

seriously imagined that I meant to marry a younger son, and live on prospects and five hundred a year, or, if you did, it is not my fault; so pray do not let us talk any more about it. I am quite willing to forget all that has passed, so let us return as fast as possible to the comfortable footing on which we were before."

Mr. Hope, however, could not treat the matter so lightly; he had really attached himself to Minna, and he was deeply wounded by her flip-pant manner. He expressed, in strong terms, his indignation at the selfish vanity with which she had drawn him on to a declaration, merely to humble him by a scornful refusal; but, at the same time, he said, he was glad that it had happened, as the event had unveiled her real character. He had thought her every thing that was good, and pure, and disinterested, but now he was undeceived, and this knowledge would work his cure.

"Ah! you may smile scornfully as you will," continued he; "but a day may come, Miss Montague, when you may repent having thus lightly rejected an honest man's affection, though he had nothing else to offer you; and in that day I shall be amply avenged." And so saying, he turned upon his heel, and disappeared amongst the bushes, leaving Minna to find her way back as she could to the ruins they had left, and to meditate, *en che-*

min, on this abrupt and unpleasant termination to her agreeable flirtation.

The rest of the party were somewhat surprised when they saw Minna issuing forth alone out of the wood, looking heated and flurried by her solitary walk ; and their surprise was not decreased, when Mr. Hope leaped out from behind a hedge a little farther on, his dress disordered from the tangled path he seemed to have broken through, and his demeanour as unlike as possible to his usual smiling complacency.

Lady Frances guessed what had passed ; but the others, who had been too much engaged in their own thoughts and feelings to investigate very narrowly those of Minna and Mr. Hope, were unable to account for this strange circumstance ; they did not give it much thought, however, for Egbert now came running towards them, to say that dinner was ready.

“ But where is Ellen ? ” said Louisa, looking round the party. “ She left me whilst I was sketching, and I thought she was walking with you, Mr. Annesley ? ”

“ Yes, so she was some time ago, but Lord Ethelwode called me away to look at the battlements which he has been restoring at the top of the old tower, and I have not seen her since. ”

No one else had seen Ellen since the party had dispersed in groups, only, Egbert said that she

had been with him on the beach, looking for shells, some time ago ; but he had soon got tired, and had left her there.

"She is gone away to some wild spot, in one of her wayward fits," said Louisa to Annesley. "Let us call her—she cannot be far off."

But though Ellen's name was shouted in every direction, no answer was returned, nor was she to be found in the wood-walks, or on the beach.

"Which way was she going when you left her, Egbert?" asked Annesley, now beginning to feel really alarmed at her unaccountable absence.

"Towards the Cradle Rock," answered Egbert ; "I believe she said she was going to look for shells there—but she must have left it long ago, for the tide is up."

The tide!—a horrible idea flashed across Edward's mind, as he heard the words. Perhaps Ellen had forgotten it was rising, and her return had been cut off by it. The rock was covered at high water, and a glance at the beach showed that it was nearly that now. If Ellen had remained there, she must before this have been borne away by the waters. He hastily hinted at his fears before he left the party to run full speed round the point which concealed the rock from view.

The instant he came in sight of it his worst apprehensions were realized. Ellen was there,

standing on the rock, which was now only a few feet above the rising water. She saw him also, for she waived her handkerchief and shouted. The sound came faintly to Edward's ear, and roused him from the deadly sickness which had come over him.

He answered her signal, to show it had been perceived, and then rushed back to meet the party, who were now turning the point.

"The boat, the boat! — we have yet time!" shouted he.

In a moment he, and St. John, and Reginald were running towards the spot where they had landed, but the boat was not there. The men had taken her back to the yacht, and were to come for the party upon a given signal from the farm-house. Egbert ran to make the signal, while the others tried to launch a boat belonging to the farmer, and which was unfortunately drawn high up under a shed. Before this could be effected, the yacht had answered the signal, and the boat pushed off from her side.

"If we could make them understand, they might row at once to the rock — it would save half an hour," said Edward, who seemed to have taken upon himself the direction of the others. "A trumpet—a speaking-trumpet—has any one a speaking-trumpet?"

Egbert remembered having seen one that morn-

ing at the farm. It was brought in less time than could have been supposed possible, and Edward shouted to the boat's crew to steer for the rock.

At first they lay on their oars, and seemed uncertain, as if they had not caught the words; but the next moment the boat's head was turned towards the rock, and the party on shore had the satisfaction of feeling that they had succeeded in gaining almost an hour's time. The gentlemen now returned to the spot where they had left Louisa and her companions.

Minna and her mother were apparently paralyzed with fear. But Louisa stood on the brink of the water, still waving to Ellen, and trying to make her hear, from time to time, a few words of encouragement.

Edward's heart grew cold with terror when he perceived that the rock was no longer visible, and that Ellen only retained her footing by the help of the stick which Egbert had used to walk with since his accident, and which, by some fortunate chance, he had left with her when he parted from her on the beach. But, even with this assistance, it was impossible that she could withstand much longer the swell of the waves. Her only chance lay in the dead calm, which left the sea without a ripple on its surface. Still the water rose and rose—it now reached her waist—and once the

agonized watchers thought she tottered as a stronger wave broke around her.

At that moment the boat shot round the point, which, till now, had hidden it from view, and a general shout hailed its appearance; but there was yet the distance of a mile between it and Ellen; and though the men, who now, for the first time, perceived the reason of the order they had received, bent to their oars with their whole strength, they were pulling against the tide, and it was a doubtful chance whether they could reach the rock before Ellen's fast-failing strength was exhausted. Another wave broke over her, but she yet retained her presence of mind, for they could see her throw off her bonnet and shawl, lest the weight should sink her, when she was borne off her footing. It was evident that this must happen in a few minutes, for the water was nearly up to her shoulders.

Edward could endure no longer; he was a tolerable swimmer, and he determined to try one more chance to save her. If he reached her he might keep her floating, at all events, till the boat could pick them up. In a moment he had thrown off his coat and boots, and plunged into the water. The rest of the party stood in agonized anxiety, watching his progress, as he breasted the waves with the strength of a desperate man. The distance between the shore and the rock was not

very great, and he evidently was decreasing it every moment. Louisa looked from him to Ellen. She yet retained her footing, but the water was nearly up to her throat; the next moment a fearful cry arose from the watchers—she was borne off her feet, and only her white dress could be seen floating on the surface of the water. With extraordinary presence of mind, however, she had managed to throw herself on her back, and she now lay perfectly still, though her clothes, already saturated with water, helped to weigh her down.

Edward saw her floating, and he struck out, with desperate energy, towards her; fortunately the tide, though it increased his difficulty, was bearing her towards him. Louisa still hoped that he might reach her before she sank; the boat, too, was nearing fast, for they were pulling for life and death. For a moment Louisa hid her face in her hands, and remained in fervent prayer. When she looked again, Ellen was sinking—there was a momentary struggle, and then the waters closed over her.

“My God! she is gone!” groaned Louisa.

But no; Edward had reached the spot by almost superhuman exertion. He dived below the water—in another moment he rose again to the surface, bearing up Ellen by her clothes. Louisa could hear his shout, as the boatmen seemed to

waver in their course, unable to perceive them, and her heart leaped within her. The men heard it too, and instantly steered for the spot; if Edward could keep up five minutes longer, they were saved. Louisa strained her eyes, almost out of their sockets, to watch every motion of the two beings floating as a speck on the waters. Edward was evidently exhausted; but he still retained a firm grasp on Ellen; only one moment more, and the boat would reach them. He seized the gunwale just as he was sinking, unable to bear up any longer, and the next minute he and his precious burden were lifted into the boat.

"They are saved!" shouted every voice from the beach, and Minna and Lady Frances burst into tears.

Louisa could not weep. She sank down on the sand, and covered her face with her hands, her whole frame trembling violently. St. John could not leave her; he remained beside her, whilst the others ran to assist in carrying Ellen and her deliverer to land; but she sent him away.

"Leave me, leave me only one moment to myself; I shall be well directly."

He was obliged to obey, and slowly joined the others at the landing-place. But, before the boat reached it, Louisa was already at the farmhouse, with a countenance calm as usual, though

deadly pale; quietly and quickly disposing every thing for Ellen's reception, whilst Lady Frances and Minna still sat on the sands, overpowered and helpless from the excitement they had undergone.

When the boat reached the landing-place, Edward would allow none but himself to carry Ellen up to the farm. He had learned to feel how unutterably precious she was to him, in the agony he suffered at the thoughts of losing her for ever; and he felt as if, in saving her from death, he had acquired a kind of property in the life he had preserved. It was not till he had deposited her on the bed which had been prepared for her, and was reluctantly forced to leave her to the care of Louisa and the farmer's wife, that he recollected himself sufficiently to answer, with composure, the stately thanks Lord Ethelwode addressed to him, as the deliverer of his step-daughter.

Reginald observed his deep emotion, and, before he had time to reply to the compliments on his gallant conduct, with which Sir Charles Conway and St. John greeted him in their turn, his friend hurried him off, saying, that he must be exhausted, and must rest whilst his clothes were being dried. But Edward could not rest till he knew that Ellen was really saved; and after Reginald had left him, he stole to the door of the

room where she lay, and leaned against it, listening, with intense anxiety, for every sound that could indicate what was passing within.

At length, after twenty minutes, which seemed to him as many hours, he heard Louisa exclaim—

“She is recovering! look, she is opening her eyes!”

And the next moment a voice, whose tones thrilled to his very soul, said, faintly, “Edward—is Edward safe?”

Ellen’s first returning thought was of him; her first word was his name; and he was on the point of bursting into the room to answer that call; but he restrained himself, with a powerful effort, and, satisfied that she was safe, he returned to another room, to pour out first his fervent thanksgiving to the Almighty Lord of life and death, and then to collect his thoughts, and master his emotion, before he was obliged to meet again the party below.

Soon after he went down, Louisa came to report that Ellen was perfectly restored, and, though weak, she seemed to have experienced no other ill effects from the danger she had incurred. Desirable as it was that she should be taken home as speedily as possible, it was necessary to wait till her clothes were dried; and she had so far recovered her strength as to be able to undergo the fatigue of dressing.

It was therefore agreed, that they should keep to their original plan of dining on the island, and returning in the evening.

The dinner, which had been so gaily anticipated, passed in silence and seriousness. All had been too recently under the influence of strong emotion, to be able to regain so soon the light-heartedness of the morning. They could not forget how near death had been to them, and the impression of awe was still fresh on their minds. The rupture between Mr. Hope and Minna increased the constraint and gloom of the party; and it was a relief to every body when Ellen was pronounced able to embark, and Sir Charles Conway gave orders for the yacht to get under weigh.

Edward felt his heart beat thick, when Ellen came down, leaning on Louisa; and her pallid countenance lighted up with one of her radiant smiles, as she held out her hand to him. Neither of them spoke. Edward did not dare trust his voice, and Ellen's was choked with the tears which rolled down, in spite of her smiles. Louisa felt her hand trembling as she leant on her arm, and she begged her to let herself be carried; she was too weak as yet for so much exertion. Lord Ethelwode and Sir Charles joined in the entreaty; but Ellen declared herself perfectly able to walk, and, putting her other

arm within Annesley's, she slowly proceeded to the beach, followed by the rest of the party.

With what different feelings did they sail back over that star-lit sea, which they had crossed in such mirth and sunshine only a few hours before! Lady Frances forgot to be frightened, and Lord Ethelwode seemed awed into gentleness. Minna's usually flippant manner was so quiet and serious, that Mr. Hope could scarcely believe she was the heartless coquette who had so lately rejected his affection with scorn, and almost wished he could forget the scene of the morning. St. John and Reginald forgot their rivalry, and Egbert's noisy mirth was subdued into awe-struck silence: but who shall tell what deeper thoughts were stirring in the hearts of the two, who had been together within the shadow of death, and had learnt, in that awful hour, that the existence of each was bound up in that of the other, and now felt, as they sat in silence-beneath the starry heavens, that the event of that day had changed the aspect of life to them, and that, on the feelings it had revealed, hung the weal or woe of their whole future fate!

CHAPTER XV.

“ But still her lips refused to send—‘ Farewell!’

• • • • •
O'er every feature of that still, pale face,
Had sorrow fix'd what time can ne'er erase;
The tender blue of that large, loving eye,
Grew frozen with its gaze on vacancy.”

BYRON.

Carriages and horses were awaiting the party on the beach, when they landed. Mr. Hope mounted his horse instantly, and with a cold bow to Miss Montague, and a general good-night to the rest, galloped off without delay. Lady Frances and Minna got into their carriage with a yawn, declaring it was the longest and most fatiguing day they had ever spent; and Louisa followed them, as soon as she had seen Ellen comfortably placed in Lord Ethelwode's, and had ascertained that she could be of no use in accompanying her to the castle. The carriages drove off, and the gentlemen followed on horse-back, with the exception of Edward, who remained alone on the beach; but instead of turning his steps towards the parsonage, he struck into a footpath which led to the castle.

The carriage could only advance slowly up the hill, and he was at the door by the time it stopped, ready to assist Ellen out.

"You here, Mr. Annesley?" she exclaimed, as the light from the hall-door fell upon his figure, as he advanced towards the carriage.

"Yes; I could not leave you, till I saw you safely deposited at home," answered Edward, drawing her arm within his, and leading her into the house. "You seem scarcely strong enough to walk yet."

At that moment Ellen did certainly require support, for she was trembling from head to foot; she could not speak, but allowed him to lead her on to the drawing-room, which was dark and empty, Lady Ethelwode having already retired to rest.

"Oh! pray, do not disturb her," exclaimed Ellen, as Lord Ethelwode proposed to call her mother up; "I do not want any body; do not let me detain you, Mr. Annesley."

"I cannot leave you till I see you placed under proper care, unless you will allow me to go for Mr. Johnson."

"No, no; I will have no apothecary; I am quite well again now, and here are plenty of people to take care of me," said she, as Mademoiselle Juliani, and her own maid, and the

housekeeper, rushed into the room, full of wonder, and terror, and exclamations.

Mademoiselle Juliani was not likely to afford much help to any body; she was so flurried, so dreadfully shocked, that she was sure she should have an *attaque de nerfs*. She was quite overpowered at the thoughts of dear Miss Percival having been so nearly drowned; she thought she still looked terribly like a corpse. She was very anxious to do any thing she could for dear Miss Percival, but she was afraid she could not offer to sit up with her.

"Of course not," said Ellen, impatiently, "I want no one to sit up with me; pray go to bed, Mademoiselle. Mrs. Stokes and Mary are more than enough to do all I require."

Mademoiselle Juliani retreated, after pouring out another torrent of regret, and horror, and sorrow, whereat Mrs. Stokes shrugged her shoulders, and muttered "humbug." Mrs. Stokes was a good, motherly kind of person, fond of Ellen; when, therefore, Edward had the latter confided to her care, he felt he no longer a pretext for prolonging his stay, and he reluctantly prepared to depart, saying, "I will not detain you any longer, Miss Percival, from the rest you so much need. To-morrow I hope to find you quite recovered. Good night."

Good night," answered Ellen, in a voice scarcely audible, as she returned the pressure of his hand. "To you I owe it, that I have still a morrow to look forward to. But I cannot thank you now, my heart is too full—you will not think me ungrateful, because I cannot tell you all I feel."

Edward's only answer was to bend down and fervently kiss the hand which still rested in his, and then he hastily left the room. He felt that he could not much longer silence the feelings which almost overpowered his calmer reason.

At the door he met Lord Ethelwode, who shook his hand warmly, as he wished him "good night," and pressed him to dine at the castle the next day. Edward accepted the invitation; and Ellen, who had heard their conversation, went to bed, forgetful of every thing, but that she should see him again on the morrow—that another whole evening would be spent in his society, which had become to her almost a necessary part of her existence.

Edward lingered near the castle, till the light which shone from Ellen's window was extinguished, and he knew that she must have gone to rest, and that her form would flit no more across the light, throwing a shadow on the white curtain. He then hurried down to the parsonage, and was glad to find that its inmates had

already retired, and that he should have the whole night to compose his thoughts, and regain his self-command, before he should be called upon to meet the Allens, and to relate the story of Ellen's danger.

His mind was too excited, to allow him to think of sleep, and he threw open the window, and paced up and down his narrow apartment. At first, as he looked out on the sea, now reflecting every star on its glassy bosom, he could only think of the fearful death which Ellen had nearly found beneath its waters, and the chill of terror came over him again at the recollection. But gradually his mind turned to other thoughts. It was that very sensation of terror, which had first roused him to the consciousness of the nature of his feelings towards Ellen. He had been blind, self-confident, and deluded; but he could deceive himself no longer. He now knew that the feeling he had believed to be brotherly regard, was love—the intense, passionate love, which such a nature as his must feel, where it loved at all. He felt that, unconsciously, Ellen had wound herself round every fibre of his heart, and that, had she died that day, the sun of his existence would have sunk with her into the grave.

As this conviction pressed itself more and more clearly upon him, he gave way, at first, to

a full torrent of passion. He recalled her to his mind, as he had seen her that morning, radiant with youth and loveliness ; and again, when her cold, inanimate form, scarcely less beautiful in the semblance of death, than in life, had rested in his arms, and he uttered, almost aloud, his fervent joy that *he* had been her deliverer—that to *him* she owed that life, more precious in his eyes than his own.

But, after the first burst of passion was over, calmer thoughts succeeded, and then Edward felt the necessity of seriously considering his situation, and of deciding on what he ought to do. He felt the impossibility of continuing his intercourse with Ellen on the same footing as before ; he could no longer be to her merely a friend, a brother—he must henceforward be her lover, or nothing.

But had he a right to yield to that love ; had he a right to strive to win her affections, to bind her to his lot, he whose sphere was so circumscribed, and whose income would never, at any time, ensure more than a moderate competence ? Could he ask Ellen, beautiful, high-born, as she was, nursed in every luxury, and unfitted, by her whole education, for its duties, its trials, its daily self-denial, to share a lot like his ; and that, too, while she was yet too young to be able to appreciate the sacrifice he asked her to make ?

No, it could not be ; every principle of rectitude, of honour, forbade it ; and the delicious dream which, for a moment, had almost blinded his reason, must be forgotten. Ellen never could—never ought to be—his wife. He buried his face in his hands, and remained long silent and motionless ; feelings too deep and bitter for words were stirring within.

Once he almost wished, in his agony, that they had sunk together beneath the cold waters, when she was clasped in his arms, her hands locked in his. He shuddered, as he cast from him the impious thought. Still her image haunted him. He dwelt, almost unconsciously, on her look, when she opened her eyes for a moment, as he caught her ere she sank ; the tones of her voice, as she pronounced his name on first recovering, sounded in his ear.

Suddenly a thought flashed across his mind ; “ If—if it were possible that she loves me ! ” he exclaimed. He remembered every look, every tone, her brightening eye when he approached, her trembling voice, her evident emotion when he assisted her out of the carriage. A wild thrill of joy shot through his whole being, as he contemplated the possibility ; but it soon passed away. Edward was not a man to yield lightly, at any time, to a thought so flattering to his vanity, and his own deep love now made him

still more diffident. He was ashamed of having, even for a moment, entertained such a supposition, and he cast it from him at once.

The path of duty was clear. He ought to leave Ethelwode, to break at once the tie that bound him to Ellen, and fly from the dangerous influence he could not feel certain of his power to resist. He must leave her, and never see her again, till he had conquered his ill-fated attachment. This was clearly what was *right*, and it must be done, though at a sacrifice a thousand-fold more agonising than the plucking out of an eye, the cutting off of a right hand.

Having come to this resolution, Edward felt more calm. His mind could rest on the decision he had made, and was no longer tossed about on the tempest of passion. He had been weak as a child; he now felt that he must gird himself with new strength, to accomplish his purpose, to go through, calmly and collectedly, with the trial that awaited him that evening, and to part with Ellen without giving her a moment's suspicion of the cause of his departure. It was due to her, it was due to himself, that they should part friends, kind, familiar friends, as they had ever been; and he determined, cost him what it might, he would wound her by no abruptness of manner, nor distress her by any

exhibition of a warmer feeling than that of friendship.

Yet the very thought of meeting her, only to say farewell, almost unmanned him; the day was now breaking, and, as sleep was impossible, he went out to try and gather strength and calmness from the pure and soothing influence of Nature. Involuntarily his steps turned towards the castle, and, in a few minutes, he found himself on the bench in the garden, from whence he could see Ellen's window. Long and full of bitter and conflicting thoughts was the watch he kept there. When he left the spot, though the sun was high in the heavens, Ellen's curtains were yet undrawn, and there was no sign of any one stirring within.

"She is sleeping still," said he; "sleeping peacefully, and undreaming of what, during this night, the thought of her has been to me. Tomorrow night, when I am gone, she will rest as peacefully—whilst I—well, thank God! it is I who am the sufferer, not her."

When Edward came down to breakfast, his pale and haggard countenance instantly attracted Mrs. Allen's attention.

"My dear Edward, what is the matter with you?" exclaimed the affectionate old lady, laying her hand on his arm.

"I am not very well," said Edward, gladly

seizing this opportunity of making illness a pretext for his proposed departure. "I think this place does not agree with me."

"My dear boy, it is not the place, I am sure; it is impossible that this pure bracing air should disagree with any one. You work too hard, that is the fact. What with visiting the poor, and attending the schools, and writing at night, you wear yourself out!"

Edward blushed, as he thought of the very different cause of his apparent illness.

"You must take a holiday, my child, to rest both body and mind," added Mrs. Allen.

"I had some thoughts, myself, of doing so," said Edward; "I have been wishing for some time to go to Oxford, and if my grandfather can spare me, I think I shall go now."

"Where are you going to, Edward?" said Mr. Allen, lifting his head from the newspaper.

"To Oxford, sir, if you have no objection; I should like to go to-morrow, if you can spare me for a week or two."

"To-morrow! you are very expeditious in your movements," said Mr. Allen, smiling; "however, I can spare you, if your grandmother, and the village, and the castle can, though I am afraid we shall all be sadly at a loss. But this is rather a sudden freak, Edward; yesterday, you were making plans for this week and

the next, and never mentioned a word of going to Oxford."

Edward could not meet his grandfather's inquiring look; he turned away with an embarrassed air. "I thought of it last night," he said; "and as you are particularly well just now, and I am not very much wanted at the schools, I think it is a good opportunity."

"Very well, my boy, you are quite welcome to go, for you work hard enough to deserve a holiday."

"By-the-by," said Mrs. Allen, wishing to change the subject, which, from some cause or other, she saw was painful to Edward, "you have told us nothing about your party, yesterday; had you a pleasant day?"

Edward had been expecting this question for some minutes past, and had been nerving himself to answer it. He told as shortly, and as calmly as possible, the story of Ellen's peril, and the part he himself had had in rescuing her.

"In the midst of life we are in death," said Mr. Allen, solemnly, as Edward ceased speaking. Mrs. Allen wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Good God, if she had died—she so young—so beautiful, so full of life!" The good old lady hid her face in her hands, as if to shut out the thought; and Edward, whose inmost soul had

been stirred by her words, rose abruptly, and went to the window.

"I must go this morning and inquire after her," said Mrs. Allen, after a pause. "You will come with me, of course, Edward?"

He could not refuse; besides he was himself trembling to hear how Ellen was after the shock she had sustained. So, at the appointed time, he was ready to offer his arm to Mrs. Allen, and they began their walk. It was a wretched one to him, for his companion was not satisfied with the brief account of Ellen's adventure which he had given, and asked question after question about all the particulars. He was glad when their arrival at the castle put a stop to the conversation, and still more so when the servant who opened the door answered Mrs. Allen's inquiries, by saying that Miss Percival had had a good night, but was not yet up. It was a relief to him to know that he should have the whole day to prepare himself for that dreaded meeting.

It was not, however, in the solitude of his own room that that preparation was to be accomplished. There was much to be done before he could leave Ethelwode. Sick people to visit, directions to give, parish matters of different kinds to be settled, in order to leave as little as possible to be a burden to his grandfather. Edward experienced that day, how blessed is the

privilege a man possesses of flying from his sorrow into the world, of finding in his profession a stimulus to exertion, a channel into which his thoughts are forcibly directed, a hope for the future which otherwise had been blank.

There was another consolation also in the great and unaffected sorrow of most of his parishioners, when they received his farewell. "If my stay here has caused the ruin of my own happiness," thought he, "it has not been altogether useless to others. Yes; to *her*, even to *her*, may I not hope that I have been of some use, that my blindness has been fatal only to myself?"

Alas! poor Edward, could he have known the truth, how would the joy which accompanied that thought have been turned to bitter remorse!

At that very moment, Ellen was watching for his arrival from the drawing-room window, which commanded a view of the postern-gate, by which he had always entered since his intimacy at the castle. Her heart was beating high, for the long, long day was past, and a few minutes more would bring him to fulfil his engagement. How childlike, how unthoughtful of all but the present hour, was at that time Ellen's love! She had never even asked herself whether she loved him, whether he loved her; she had neither questioned the past, nor looked anxiously into the future:

the present was all in all. To feel that he was near her, to drink in the music of his words, to let her eyes rest on his countenance, was enough; she was happy, intensely happy, and she asked not why.

When Edward entered the room, she met him with her radiant smile and outstretched hand. She was paler than usual, and her manner was more agitated, but Edward's anxious glance could detect no other traces of the peril she had undergone.

"I need scarcely ask you, if you are recovered from the effects of your accident," he said, as he took her offered hand.

"No, indeed; I am quite well, and only feel rather fatigued and shaken. I think I ought rather to inquire after your health," she added, smiling, but looking anxiously in his face; "you look much more like a ghost than I do, notwithstanding mamma's opinion of my pale face. Are you ill?"

The tone of affectionate anxiety with which she spoke made Edward's heart beat, but he answered hastily, that he had nothing the matter with him, only a slight head-ache. Ellen was struck with the abruptness of his manner, but she was still more astonished when he left her to go to the farther end of the room, to talk to her mother and Mademoiselle Juliani, a piece of civi-

lity wholly unnecessary, as he was well aware of Lady Ethelwode's aversion to the trouble of keeping up a conversation. However, this day her ladyship was unusually animated, for she was really grateful to Edward for having saved her child, and he remained beside the *chaise-longue*, till dinner was announced and Lord Ethelwode made his appearance, which he never did, on ordinary occasions, till the precise hour of sitting down to table. Edward gave his arm to Lady Ethelwode, and sat beside her; Ellen sat opposite to him, but her back was to the light, and he could not see the large tears which trembled on her eyelashes, nor the increased paleness of her countenance.

The dinner passed off tolerably well; Lord and Lady Ethelwode were uncommonly gracious, even to each other; Egbert was in high spirits, and insisted on telling Mademoiselle Juliani, over and over again, the story of Ellen's escape, with the minutest particulars.

"Mr. Annesley saved her," he repeated. "If it had not been for Mr. Annesley, Ellen must have been drowned."

"That is true," said Lord Ethelwode. "We owe Mr. Annesley the lives of both our children," (it was the first time he had ever called Ellen his child). "Such a debt cannot be repaid," added

he, "but I hope to prove, ere long, that it is not to be forgotten."

"Indeed I deserve no thanks at all," said Edward, as calmly as he could. "I did nothing but what any other man would have done in my place."

"Yet there were six men standing on the beach, and you were the only one who risked your life to save mine," exclaimed Ellen, almost involuntarily, and blushing crimson as she spoke.

"I have had my reward," answered Edward, in a lower voice, as his eye met hers. He dared not trust himself to speak again just then, but he seized the first opportunity of changing the subject.

When dinner was over, and the ladies had retired, Edward informed Lord Ethelwode of his intended departure.

"Going away? going back to Oxford, my dear Annesley?" exclaimed his lordship, for once forgetting all his usual stateliness; "I am truly sorry to hear it; what can have induced you to form so sudden a resolution?"

"I wish to obtain some curacy near Oxford; I have even some hopes of a University living; besides, it is necessary that I should keep a certain time of residence at my college, as a condition of my fellowship."

“I do not wonder at your wishing to obtain a higher office than that you now hold. I have often thought, that a village like this was a very narrow sphere for talents like yours—yes, I will say talents, at the risk of wounding your too great modesty. But I have been for some time revolving in my mind a plan which would, at all events, relieve you from the laborious duties of a curate, and will, I trust, keep you here till preferment more worthy of your merit is offered to you.”

Edward bowed, and awaited in silence the unfolding of the plan which Lord Ethelwode had announced with great stateliness, and evident certainty of its being approved of.

“Egbert is now of an age to apply seriously to study,” continued his lordship; “I have a great aversion to the indiscriminate mixture of a public school, and wish him to remain under my own eye, till he is prepared for college. I have, in consequence, been anxiously looking out for some time for a tutor for him, one in whom I could repose such an important trust with perfect confidence. I need scarcely say that you are the person I have fixed upon. I do not hesitate to say, that I have never seen any young man whose manners, demeanour, and principles, fitted him so perfectly for such a r
office, as the education of a you

and I shall feel satisfied in placing my son in your hands, that he will become worthy of his noble name, and fitted to fulfil the important duties entailed upon him by his high station. Of course you will become an inmate of my house, not as a dependant, but as an honoured guest; and your salary shall be named by yourself; such services as yours would be cheaply obtained at any price. This is my plan, Mr. Annesley; may I hope that you will seriously consider it, and that it may induce you to remain where your talents and character are so fully appreciated?"

Edward had listened in silent astonishment to Lord Ethelwode's speech; and for a moment, the thought of becoming an inmate in the same house with Ellen staggered his resolution. Long before his host had finished speaking, however, his hesitation was over. He thanked Lord Ethelwode warmly for his favourable opinion and the generous offer he had made; but, at the same time, he firmly and respectfully declined accepting it. He had always wished, he said, to consecrate what powers he had to the work of the ministry: the profession he had embraced was his own free choice, and he felt himself bound to labour in it. Finally, money was no object to him, and he had, therefore, no motive for sacrificing his independence.

Lord Ethelwode received this answer with astonishment, mingled with displeasure, that any request of his should be refused; but he conquered the feeling with an extraordinary effort, and merely said, as he rose from table—

“I appreciate the motives of your refusal, but I will not accept it as final: when you have considered my proposal more deliberately, you will, perhaps, find reason to change your determination.” He left the room before Edward could assure him, a second time, that his decision was unalterable.

Edward returned slowly and thoughtfully to the drawing-room. Lady Ethelwode was there alone, dozing, as usual; but as he went up to the window, he saw Ellen slowly walking to her favourite evening station beneath the sycamore. He determined on following her; it was better they should part at once; and he felt that he would rather wish her that last farewell when they were alone than before witnesses: none would be there to watch the agony he might not be wholly able to conceal, no image but hers would mingle in the recollection of that hour.

With this thought he took the path he had seen her follow. She was sitting on the bench when he came up to her, but in such deep meditation, that she did not hear his footsteps. He was glad of it; he stopped a few paces

to gaze at her unobserved. He felt that perhaps he might never see her again, and his eye scanned earnestly every lineament of that exquisitely graceful form, that countenance, whose loveliness seemed almost unearthly, as she sat there in deep, apparently melancholy, musing. It was some minutes before she changed her attitude, and then he drew near her; she turned quickly round as she heard his step, and her countenance instantly brightened.

"I am glad you are come," said she, making room for him to sit down beside her; "the sunset is so lovely, and the air as warm as it was two months ago: the first evening you spent here, do you remember that evening?"

"Yes, perfectly," said Edward, so coldly that she turned away to hide the tears which again rose to her eyes. Both were silent for awhile. Edward felt that he had given pain (though her tears were concealed), and he was bitterly reproaching himself. At length Ellen spoke again.

"Mr. Annesley," she said, with a heightened colour, "what is the matter with you to-day? why do you speak so strangely, so coldly? have I done any thing to offend you? perhaps you think me ungrateful, because I cannot express what I feel. Indeed, indeed I am not if I could but tell you, if you could but know . . ."

She clasped her hands, and looked up to him with streaming eyes.

“Ellen ! Miss Percival ! for Heaven’s sake, do not speak so ! I deserve no gratitude ; had I ten lives, I would willingly peril them all to save you even a moment’s sorrow.” He checked himself, and then resumed, in a calmer tone and with a faint smile : “ It is sorrow, not anger, that makes me so silent, so disagreeable a companion to-night ; and I regret it the more, as I fear my last visit will leave a less favourable recollection than I could wish.”

“Your last visit ? what can you mean ?” exclaimed Ellen, breathlessly.

“I am going away to-morrow—going to Oxford for an indefinite time, and I am come now to wish you farewell. The sooner that painful word is said the better.” He paused again, and then continued more hurriedly : “ Our paths in life are widely different, and we may never meet again ; may I hope that through the brilliant career which will, probably, be yours, you will sometimes remember the friend of your childhood ?”

Ellen did not answer ; whilst he spoke, her face had gradually assumed the hue and the rigidity of marble ; and, as he uttered the last words, she convulsively grasped his arm, and, with a faint cry, sank senseless to the ground.

For a moment Edward stood as if thunder-struck ; then the truth flashed across his mind, and his first feeling was one of intense and bewildering joy. Every other consideration was momentarily forgotten. He hung over Ellen's lifeless form, and called upon her, with every term of passionate endearment, pressed her cold hands, again and again, to his lips ; but all his efforts to bring back animation were vain. She lay cold and motionless as a corpse, and alarm soon recalled him from his first wild frenzy of delight.

He ran to the castle for assistance, and Ellen was carried, still insensible, to her bed. When she was at length restored to animation, she was delirious ; and the medical man, who had been hastily called in, pronounced her to be under the influence of a violent brain fever, brought on by the accident of the previous day, and subsequent over-exertion and excitement.

CHAPTER XVI.

" But still the smothered fondness burns within him.
The sense of honour and desire of fame
Drive the big passion back into his heart."

ADDISON'S *Cato*.

The party which had been so long assembled at Oaklands was now on the eve of dispersion. The morning after the excursion to the island, Lady Frances and her daughters drove out early to pay some farewell visits in the neighbourhood, in which Louisa narrowly escaped being forced to accompany them. St. John listened with dismay while these arrangements were under discussion, for he had fixed his departure for the next day, and had proposed to himself the pleasure of one more ride with Louisa. He half resolved to postpone his journey to another day if she went; but he was saved the necessity by its being at length decided that, on Fanny's account, the ladies should take the chariot instead of the open carriage, which made it impossible for a fourth person to go. This being arranged, St. John announced to Sir Charles his intention
"we
on the morrow; but Loui

and he was glad to reserve this intelligence for her ear at some more private moment. He retired to make the necessary preparations for his journey, whilst she, in happy ignorance, having seen her aunt and cousins depart on their visiting expedition, repaired to the library, where she was soon joined by Reginald.

He took his seat beside her easel, with a book in his hand; but he did not read, nor did he seem better disposed for conversation than for study.

"Reginald, are you ill?" asked Louisa, at length, after a long silence, during which she had several times looked up from her painting, and each time seen her companion sunk in thought, with a gloomy expression of countenance, and his eyes fixed on the opposite wall, where hung a large picture, in which they figured together, he leading a pony which Louisa, then about nine years old, was riding, and repressing, at the same time, the caresses of a large Newfoundland dog, who was rudely expressing his joy at the prospect of a walk. But Louisa was sitting with her back to the wall, and thus the apparent object of his long reverie was concealed from her when she startled him from it by her affectionate inquiries.

"No—yes—perhaps I am ill; bodily suffering is nothing," was the intelligible reply.

Louisa laid down her brush, and looked at him with amazement.

"My dear Reginald, now I am sure you must be ill, for I never before heard you speak, or saw you look as you do this morning. What is the matter?"

The kind tone of these words seemed to soothe the suffering, whatever it was, which had contracted his brow; and a smile played on his handsome features as he took her hand, and said, "I am easily cured, you see, dear Louisa. But, in truth, I was not ill—I was only thinking, and...."

"I am afraid your thoughts were dark, then. Their outward and visible effects might have been ascribed to deep meditation on some nefarious plot, some treason, murder, or suicide. You were wont to let the sun shine upon your reveries."

"And does not each year that we live rob us of some part of that sunshine which at first illumines not only the present of our daily existence, but also our dreams of the future?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Louisa, interrupting him; "no; this is the language of morbid feeling, not of a sober and healthful view of life. The feeling would not be a true one, even in a woman, for whom the flight of time must have things unknown to you. But you, the free, the

strong, the active—life cannot so soon be disenchanted for you! You do not speak your own thoughts, Reginald, or you are much changed."

"Perhaps I am," was the laconic answer.

Again Louisa looked anxiously at him; and, when he met her glance, he seemed a moment undecided, as if about to take some desperate resolution, and then turned away his eyes.

"I had indeed remarked a change," said she, after a few minutes' silence; "however, as you were unusually reserved, I would make no inquiries; but, unless you have some better friend than the companion and sister of many happy years, tell me what has happened, dear Reginald, what has distressed you?"

"Louisa," he exclaimed, strangely excited by her words, "do you indeed wish to hear the truth, and will you not repent having urged me to speak it? So be it, then! I—I am raving, I believe," he added, in a calmer voice, and forcing a smile after another inward struggle. "The truth is, I am not fit for this quiet life; idleness unhinges me."

Louisa was not a little surprised at this quiet conclusion to a speech so vehemently begun, but, with a woman's tact, she forbore to press him, and answered quietly,

"I am sorry to hear you say that, for it proves to me that you *are* changed. Formerly a quiet

life was not an idle one to you. I never saw you without occupation before."

"You forget that I am daily waiting for orders from the Foreign Office, and this suspense prevents me settling to any occupation. The days when I could read, and draw, and botanize with you are passed. The struggle of real life has begun for me, and a fierce one it must be," he continued, rising again suddenly from his languid attitude, "since I am bent on victory."

"I am glad to see you are unchanged in energy, at least," said Louisa, smiling; "but, if it renders you a restless or an unsociable being, I shall fear the extent of your ambition. Let it not, dear Reginald, rob you of the flowers you might innocently enjoy by the way, by the delusive prospect of the grandeur you may never attain."

"Grandeur! and do you then think, Louisa, that they are visions of mere grandeur which have such power over my soul? I am ambitious, it is true—more than ever ambitious—and my unwearied efforts shall accomplish for me all that fortune has denied, and more than fortune ever could bestow, or I will perish in the attempt. But...."

"I do not understand

"No, no; I know;

ginald, bitterly; "the days are passed when, if I were anxious or unhappy....."

"Reginald, stop! Spare me the reproach you half uttered. I do not deserve it: your own heart must tell you that I do not. I met you, on your return, with the same confidence and affection as of old; but I have been repaid with reserve and an evident wish to shun my society. I am not used to force it upon any one; and to you only would I now have made such an explanation, in answer to an unjust, an uncalled-for reproach."

These words were spoken with Louisa's proudest manner; but, when her old playfellow stretched out his hand with an imploring look for pardon, hers was instantly given, and her noble countenance lightened up with one of those smiles, which imparted to it more than the radiance of mere physical beauty. Such a smile is a triumph of spirit over matter.

"I must go and prepare for riding," said Louisa, some time after; "will you go with me?"

"Is not Mr. St. John going? I thought I heard you appoint the hour with him."

"You did; and what of that? now I ask you to join us."

"No; I am not fit to join in his gay conversation, and do not choose to expose myself to his sarcastic observations."

"If such is still your mood, you are perhaps right to remain alone," answered Louisa, in a displeased tone, as she left the room to dress.

Reginald paced up and down for some minutes, seemingly much excited; then rushed out to wait for Louisa in the hall, that he might be ready to assist her to mount, as he could not with patience see her allow St. John to perform that office for her. The latter gentleman showed evident signs of displeasure at his interference; but, in Louisa's presence, neither of them ventured to express their feelings, and the riding party went off peaceably, whilst Reginald, when he found that Sir Charles was gone out on business and could not ride with them, half repented that he had not accompanied them himself, to break the *tête-à-tête*.

This reflection did not tend to soothe his ruffled temper; and, after chafing some time in the house, he set off, at a furious pace, towards the beach, hoping, perhaps, amidst the wild confusion of rocks and the roar and tumult of the waves, to find solace and sympathy in the conflict of his feelings.

Meanwhile, the two persons who thus engrossed his thoughts were proceeding quietly on their way; and, though they were alone, and though this ride was to be their last, it proved as uneventful as any that had . . . if

Louisa did feel a weight upon her heart, after hearing of St. John's approaching departure, at least nothing betrayed her feelings to him. Minna's indiscreet remarks had taught her to cover her open countenance with a veil; and, if she felt a pang, she was at that moment too intent on adjusting her stirrup, for Arthur to be able to read his triumph in her face.

Gloomily enough did that evening pass at Oaklands. Sir Charles, ever cheerful and ready for conversation, could hardly elicit a word from any of his companions. Lady Frances was so tired, from all her exertions on this and the preceding day, that she fell asleep almost immediately after dinner. Minna, knowing it was a hopeless attempt to attract the attention of either Reginald or St. John, had taken up a novel; Fanny was busy finishing some songs Ellen had lent her to copy, and Louisa turned from one occupation to another with a restlessness very unusual to her, and finally amused herself with looking over a book of prints. From the young men Sir Charles derived as little assistance: Reginald was divided between a book and the contemplation of the carpet, and St. John, who from some secret feeling—was it conscience? was it regret?—had shrunk from taking his accustomed seat by Louisa, after a few languid attempts conversation, also sunk into silence.

However, as usually happens, a woman was the first to shake off the selfish enjoyment of her own thoughts and to exert herself for others. Louisa laid down the book to which she had appeared to be giving so much attention, and proposed a game of chess to her father. The game was begun; and, as St. John sat watching her, and heard the calm tone of her voice, and saw a smile play on her lips, the cloud darkened on his brow.

At the close of the evening, when she was about to leave the room, he sprang forward to open the door for her; and, as she shook hands with him, she said, in a low, but assured voice—

“I suppose you will start early to-morrow?”

“I am afraid I shall start too early to see you,” he replied, in a tone of feeling, and pressing the hand he held; “but we shall meet again—soon, I trust—and may I hope it will be with pleasure on your part?”

The crimson blush which mantled Louisa's cheek, as she looked down not to meet his gaze, said more than the few polite words with which she answered him, and his vain heart bounded with joy.

“Ha! ha! proud girl!” he mentally ejaculated; “you own my influence, spite of yourself, and I hold in my hand the chord which vibrates to your i
le game that I

have played. To conquer and mould to my wishes fifty weak, vain women, were little increase of glory to Arthur St. John; but to have brought *her* proud heart to yield to my power!—I could almost love her for the pleasure she has given me!—Love her?—yea; even as that fond fool Reginald loves her. And here I leave him in possession of the field; and my triumph may be short-lived. But what is that to me? God knows, I do not wish her to be miserable; I hope he may comfort her. Even if I cared enough for her to wish to commit such an egregious piece of folly, I *could* not marry her. I must have money to tempt me—money, and much of it! Yet, if ever the poets spoke truth, if ever it could be said that woman's love was sweeter than the smiles of Plutus, it must be the love of such a woman as Louisa Conway!" and a sigh actually escaped the breast of the callous man of the world.

The next morning, whatever feeling of regret Louisa might have felt on finding St. John's place vacant at the breakfast-table, was quickly merged in painful anxiety about Ellen, of whose sudden illness she was apprized, by a note from Mademoiselle Juliani, requesting her to come as speedily as possible to the castle, as Ellen had so often called for her in her delirium, that they were in hopes her presence might have a soothing effect.

Louisa would not have needed this request to make her instantly hasten to her friend. Within an hour of receiving the summons, she was established by her bed-side, and, as Ellen continued in the same dangerous state, she wrote in the afternoon to her father to ask his permission to comply with Lady Ethelwode's earnest request that she would remain at the castle for the present. The wished-for permission was instantly granted, and Louisa gave herself up entirely to the care of her friend. Well was it for poor Ellen that she did so; for Lady Ethelwode was totally unfit to take upon herself the charge of watching over her child, and Mademoiselle Juliani, had she been less incapable, was required to be in constant attendance upon her ladyship, so that Ellen would have been left wholly to the care of servants, but for Louisa's unwearying affection and solicitude.

The news of Ellen's illness accelerated Lady Frances's departure from Oaklands. In spite of herself, she stood in a certain awe of her grave brother-in-law, and she had no wish to be left to his society, and that of the often gloomy and abstracted Reginald. Her daughters, for different reasons, were equally eager to go. Minna felt the loss of Mr. Hope, and there was no chance of replacing him at Oaklands; Brighton, which was now beginning to fill, offered a much

more favourable prospect, and Fanny, who had recovered her voice, was anxious to exhibit its powers where she should be quite safe from Ellen's dangerous rivalry. Lady Frances and her daughters being thus happily unanimous, her ladyship took the first opportunity of announcing her intention to Sir Charles, and then went to pay a farewell visit of inquiry at the castle, and at the same time to take leave of Louisa.

"I know, my dearest child," she said to the latter, as she came out of Ellen's room for a few minutes, to obey her aunt's summons, "I know that your dear father and yourself wish that I should stay a little longer, and we should all be delighted to do so; indeed, to go away at this distressing moment, is peculiarly trying to me, and the poor girls are quite in despair at the thoughts of leaving you; still, I have been so long away from home, that I think it is my duty to go; and dear Montague is getting quite impatient to have us with him once more: he is so lonely without us. So, I hope, my dear Louisa, that you will feel with me, that, however painful to all parties, I am right in complying with his wishes?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Louisa, with a scarcely repressed smile; "indeed, I think my uncle has been very good-natured in allowing you to remain so long, and *very* considerate in

only requiring your return, when there was no prospect of further amusement in the country."

Lady Frances felt, as usual, abashed before her niece's straightforward looks and words, and, when she took leave of Sir Charles, she took care to say nothing more about "dear Montague," but to reserve her eloquence, to express her sorrow, at being forced to leave him at a moment when she must be so much wanted to replace Louisa.

CHAPTER XVII.

"She woke at length—but not as sleepers wake—
Rather the dead, for life seem'd something new ;
A strange sensation, which she must partake
Perforce, since whatsoever met her view
Struck not on memory, though a heavy ache
Lay at her heart, whose earliest beat, still true,
Brought back the sense of pain."

BYRON.

For many days Ellen lay hovering between life and death. To Annesley those days seemed long, weary years of misery. It was in vain that he toiled with double energy in his professional avocations, or strove to bury thought in the pursuit of abstruse science—the idea of Ellen, on the bed of death, haunted him in every place. Her image, pale and lifeless, such as he had seen her in that last awful moment, which had revealed to him the truth, was ever before his eyes, and seemed to reproach him for the thoughtless imprudence, through which he had destroyed her happiness, perhaps, and his heart stood still at the thought—her life.

He could no longer delude himself with the

belief that he alone would suffer from the proud self-confidence, which had made him carry on without fear such constant and familiar intercourse with a being like Ellen, nor hope that if he had thereby irretrievably wrecked his own happiness, to her, at least, it had been productive only of good. Fool that he had been! Might he not have known how vain was the dream of mere friendship between himself and a young girl like Ellen—so lovely, so richly gifted with the capacity of loving, and with so few to love—so child-like in her clinging trust, where she found something to trust to! Might he not, if he had not been utterly blinded by his self-deception, have seen how such a dream as this must end!

No thrill of triumph came now with the conviction of Ellen's love. Was it not that love which now laid her low on the bed of sickness, perhaps of death? Had it not darkened her young life with the first blight of sorrow? And he was the cause of all. He had stolen from that young and unsuspecting heart its rich treasure of affections, he had taught it to lean upon him with full undoubting trust, and then he had rudely withdrawn the support, and the flower had fallen to the ground!

It was in the solitude and stillness of night, when the stir and business of the day were over,

and he was left to commune with himself in the solitude of his own room, that these thoughts came upon him with almost maddening force. Often, when they became too oppressive, he would rush from the house, and pace up and down the sea-shore, till the grey dawn gleamed upon the waters. At other times, he would take up his long, weary watch beneath Ellen's window. Her room was on the ground floor, and through the stillness he could sometimes hear her voice in the wild fever of delirium, calling upon his name, entreating him not to leave her, and then bewailing his absence, his indifference, in tones that wrung his very soul. Oh! during those long hours, with what agonized earnestness did he pray that that young life might be spared, that he might be allowed by the devotion of his whole existence to repay the sufferings he had brought upon her! How did he long to make his way into that chamber, to take up his station by her sick bed, to watch over and cherish that precious being, to lay himself, his existence at her feet! Hour after hour did he spend beneath that window, listening for every sound, watching every shadow that passed before the dim light; and it was not till daybreak brought with it the fear of discovery, that he reluctantly quitted his station, and returned home to prepare himself to go through

the duties of the day with outward self-possession and composure.

Mr. and Mrs. Allen had been themselves too anxious and too much interested in the fate of their favourite Ellen, to wonder that Edward should have at once given up his journey on hearing the dangerous nature of her illness. The real causes of that journey they were still ignorant of. Edward was usually so open, so sincere, that they were unused to seek any motive for his actions, beyond that which he himself assigned to them. But Mrs. Allen's maternal eyes soon perceived the alteration in his looks, the appearance of effort which accompanied his usual easy cheerfulness, his increased love of solitude, and the restless exertion by which he seemed striving to drive away painful thoughts. All this was noted by the affectionate old lady; but she refrained from questioning him; she thought that it was better to leave him to take his own time to speak, and she only showed her solicitude by an increased tenderness of manner, and a still more anxious attention to his comfort.

There were others more clear-sighted in the village. Many an old parishioner remarked that Mr. Annesley had never been the same since the day Miss Percival fell sick. He had several times been seen pacing, at daybreak, on the

sea-shore, and once he had been perceived watching beneath Ellen's window. This was more than enough to authorize the village gossips to conclude that their young curate was in love, and one and all wished that his love might prosper. Reginald, too, had long read the heart of his friend, but even to him Edward was silent. He could not speak of Ellen when her very life hung on a thread; he could not utter his passionate love, nor, had he done so, could he have justified his yielding to it without betraying Ellen's secret. It was better to be silent; and Reginald, having discovered his anxiety to avoid the subject, respected his feelings too much to approach it. Egbert was the only person to whom Edward could speak of Ellen: the boy's devoted attachment to his sister made him think it but natural that every one who had known her, and Edward especially, must love her equally.

It was a bitter grief to him that he was not allowed to enter her room, or take his place amongst her attendants. He would sit for hours outside her door, quiet and motionless, and was only happy when Louisa opened it to give him news of her patient, or to send him on some errand for her. When his father, anxious for his health, drove him away from his station, he would go down to the parsonage, to seek conso-

lation in telling all his sorrows to Edward. Mutual affection for Ellen was a strong tie between them, and Edward often cheered the boy when his own heart was almost hopeless. He made him read with him—walk with him—he strove to interest him in books and study, and, in fact, virtually assumed the functions of tutor, which he had again refused to take up formally at the castle. He felt as if, in being useful to Ellen's brother, he was repairing in some measure the evil he had done to her. The boy, who already loved him, as all did love Edward, who came within the influence of his winning manners, his refined and lofty mind, and the kindness of a heart full of the best charities of our nature, soon learnt to look up to him with an affection and reverence resembling Ellen's in their depth and entireness.

Lord Ethelwode, despite his mortification at Edward's repeated refusal of his condescending offers, could not but confess that he had worked a most beneficial change in the habits and manners of his son, and he began to think that it would be incumbent on him to provide for Edward's future promotion, whether he chose to arrive at it by the path his lordship had wished to open to him, or not.

At length Ellen's youth and good constitution prevailed against the virulence of the disease.

Dr. Curewell pronounced her out of danger, and Egbert was raised to the summit of happiness by being commissioned to carry the joyful news to Oaklands and to the village. Edward's thanksgivings were too deep and heartfelt to be loud, and Egbert was almost disappointed at the quiet manner in which his friend received the intelligence which made him shout and jump for joy.

He had hoped to find in Edward an abettor to a plan he had formed, as he ran down the hill, of having the bells rung for Ellen's recovery; but there was something in Edward's manner so opposed to all noisy demonstrations of gladness, that he thought it better not to mention it. He hinted at it to Mrs. Allen, who was the confidante of many of his schemes, but she instantly forbade the very thought of it. Such a thing as a merry peal was not to be thought of till Ellen's head was much stronger than it could possibly be now. Egbert was obliged, therefore, to content himself with venting his glee by scrambling over the wildest part of the park, singing and hallooing at the top of his voice all the while, and employing his superabundant animal spirits in overcoming every obstacle that was in his way or out of it.

"In a few days," thought he, "Ellen will be here too, and scrambling with me again, as she

used to do — darling Ellen !” And he gave a higher leap at the thought.

But Ellen’s progress was by no means so rapid as Egbert anticipated. She had been weakened to a fearful degree by her illness, and her mind seemed to have suffered even more than her body. Whilst she recovered her strength by very slow degrees, a deep depression seemed to have settled upon her spirits. In vain did Louisa try to rouse her to something of her former animation—she was listless and indifferent to every thing. Day after day Egbert came to her room, hoping to find her stronger and more cheerful, and he became almost impatient, when, at the end of a fortnight, he saw her as weak and unfit for exertion as the first day she left her bed.

“ When will you be able to come and walk again with me and Mr. Annesley ?” exclaimed he, one day, as he entered her darkened room, and found her reclining, pale and sad, as usual, on her sofa, whilst Louisa read to her.

“ Mr. Annesley !” exclaimed Ellen, with a start and a deep blush, “ when did he come back again ?”

“ Come back !—why he has never been away. What could have put that into your head, Ellen ?”

“ I do not know,” replied Ellen, looking bewildered. “ I thought — I am sure he told me he was going away, the day I fell ill.”

“ You must have dreamt it whilst you had the fever—he has never moved from here ; and, if he thought of it before, he was too anxious about you, I am sure, to think of going away whilst you were so ill. You cannot imagine, Ellen, how anxious he has been—as anxious even as I was—and he was so kind to me when I was miserable about you !”

“ My dear Egbert, you must not talk so much to Ellen at one time,” said Louisa, who had observed that Ellen’s colour had been changing every minute whilst he was speaking. “ She is not strong enough to bear much talking yet.”

“ But when will she be strong enough ?” exclaimed the boy, almost petulantly. “ I have so much to tell her—and I want to show her the books, Mr. Annesley.....”

“ Egbert, pray go now—look how deadly pale she is—she is quite exhausted.”

Egbert reluctantly departed, and Louisa ran to Ellen, who had sank back on the sofa, and hid her face in the pillows. Louisa leant over her and silently kissed her, and then began rubbing her temples with *eau-de-cologne*. Ellen lifted up her head, and, taking Louisa’s hand, she warmly pressed it.

“ Dear Louisa, what a kind, unwearied friend you have been to me all this time that I have been

so troublesome, so fretful! What can I ever do for you in return?"

"If you want to do any thing for me," said Louisa, smiling, "just try and walk into the next room. You can lean upon me as heavily as you please—it is only a few steps, and it would do you so much good."

Ellen shook her head and turned away.

"Now do not refuse to do the only thing I ask. Dear Ellen, you will never get strong whilst you persist in remaining in this close, dark room, and will not try to exert yourself. Look!"—and she threw open the door—"how bright and warm the sun is shining in. You who were such a sun-worshipper, how can you prefer this dull coal fire to the brilliant sunshine?"

"There is no sunshine for me any where now," murmured Ellen, as she covered her eyes to shut out the dazzling light.

Louisa closed the door and came back to the sofa.

"Ellen, is it not ungrateful to speak so?—you, surrounded with so many blessings—you, so richly gifted—you, who have only so lately been twice mercifully snatched from the very jaws of death?"

"Why should I be thankful for a mercy I did not wish for?" said Ellen, petulantly. "I had

rather have died—I wished to die. What is life to me, that I should be thankful for it?”

“Have you read the future, Ellen, that you are so sure that life has no blessings in store for you? Have you so little faith in Him, without whose knowledge not even a sparrow falleth to the ground, as to think that He has preserved your life for no purpose?”

Ellen burst into tears.

“Louisa, I know that I am faithless—that I am ungrateful. I have struggled, indeed I have, against it; but I cannot overcome this feeling. You would pity me if you knew how miserable, how humbled, how hopeless I am—if you knew what I have suffered.” She burst into a fit of hysterical sobbing, which fearfully shook her attenuated frame.

“I do know, dearest,” said Louisa, gently—
“I have long known all—when you were delirious you often spoke aloud, and I learnt every thing in that way.”

“Then others know it, too?” murmured Ellen, blushing crimson as she spoke.

“No—I took care that at those times no one should be with you but myself, or the nurse, who is a stranger, and could not understand what you were talking of. Your secret is quite safe, so do not vex yourself, dearest.”

Ellen laid her head on Louisa's arm, and sobbed long and bitterly; at length she said—

“ I never could have told you—but it is a comfort to feel there is some one whom I can speak to, who knows what I suffer. But not even you can know what I go through—the misery, the humiliation. And I make you miserable, too !” added she, as she felt Louisa's tears falling on her forehead. “ Oh, would that I had died !—died that day before he reached me—I should have died happy then !”

“ Ellen, Ellen, do not give way to this wild despair. Do you think I should have been less miserable than now, if I had lost you for ever ? And your mother, and poor Egbert, who almost worships you ? and *he*—he who risked his own life to save your's ? Would you rashly throw from you a life so dearly bought ?”

Ellen seemed struck by those last words. She did not answer, yet she struggled to overcome her emotion. It was a hard struggle—but, in a few moments, her breath came more easily—the convulsive sobbing ceased—and she became once more calm. Louisa saw that her words had had the effect she intended, and she did not urge them farther. The more Ellen dwelt on those words, the more she felt soothed. In the bitterness of her humiliation, when she first awoke to the consciousness of her love for one who had

never striven to win it, she had not considered, except as an act of humanity, the unhesitating devotion with which he had risked his life to save her's. Life became more valuable in her eyes, when she remembered that she owed it to *him*. It was almost a gift from his hands.

Hope, too ! that blessed prophet, whose voice is never silenced in youth till the heart itself has died under its misery, came to her aid. She could not be wholly indifferent to one whom she remembered from childhood as the kindest, gentlest, truest of friends — proof after proof of his interest in her, his anxious desire for her welfare, her improvement, came back to her memory. She called up every word, every look, every tone of that last day they had spent together — that half-happy, half-awful day — and something like joy once more awoke in her heart. Louisa had the satisfaction to see her lie down to rest that night in child-like peace, and her own smile, only sadder than it used to be, break over her pale countenance, as she returned her friend's affectionate “good night.”

From that day Ellen began to improve rapidly. The life that Edward had saved, at the risk of his own, was worth an effort ; and she exerted herself to conquer the morbid despondency which had hitherto weighed her down. The wish, too, to see him once more, to be assured of her fate,

had a powerful influence over her, and she became almost as eager to escape from her present seclusion as she had been averse to leave it a few days before. There were still, indeed, times when her heart sank within her, and she felt her burden too heavy to be borne. But Louisa, whose watchful eye marked every change in her countenance, was always ready to cheer and to comfort her; and she learned at last to feel, that even were her worst fears true, so long as Louisa and Egbert were left to her, there was still something in the world worth living for. At the end of another fortnight, to Egbert's inexpressible joy, Ellen once more made her appearance in the drawing-room.

According to his usual custom, whether in joy or in sorrow, Egbert flew down to the parsonage in search of Edward Annesley.

"Ellen is up!—Ellen is in the drawing-room! She has been out on the terrace!" exclaimed he, as he burst into Mrs. Allen's quiet parlour, where she was arranging a basket of baby-linen for a poor woman in the village, whilst Edward sat by the window with a book in his hand, and his eyes fixed on the castle, which he could see through the trees, thinking of Ellen. He started, and let fall the book at Egbert's announcement.

"How very glad I am to hear it!" said Mrs.

Allen, warmly ; “ how I hope she will really get quite strong and well ! ”

“ Oh ! she is quite well now,” said Egbert. “ She walked across the drawing-room without help *almost*, only leaning a little on my shoulder. She will very soon be able to ride and walk with you and me, Mr. Annesley.”

“ I hope she will not be so imprudent as to think of riding or walking for some time to come,” said Mrs. Allen, more warmly than was her wont ; for she had of late had some misgivings as to the effect of the said rides and walks on Edward’s feelings. “ I think she over-exerted herself in that way this summer, and that may have contributed to make her ill.”

Egbert thought that no degree of riding or walking could possibly hurt any body, much less Ellen. He set this down, therefore, in his own mind as an old woman’s notion.

“ But when are you coming to see her ? ” he continued, changing the subject, as he and Mrs. Allen could not agree upon it. “ Won’t you come to-day ? ”

“ Not to-day,” said Mrs. Allen. “ She has already exerted herself a great deal, by your account, and the fatigue of seeing visitors might be too much for her.”

“ And won’t *you* come either ? ” asked Egbert, turning to Annesley. “ Do you know that Ellen

thought, till the other day, that you were gone away. She dreamt it, I believe, in the fever; and she would scarcely believe me, when I told her you were here, and had never talked of going. She was so surprised, that she nearly fainted away; so you ought to come, to convince her that it *was* a dream."

"I shall go directly," said Edward; "I shall not stay long," added he, answering his grandmother's deprecating look. "I shall be back to walk with you in half an hour."

He took his hat and walked away with Egbert, who was triumphing in his success, with an elasticity of step very unlike his late demeanour. Mrs. Allen looked after them for a minute or two, and then sat down again to her work.

"I am afraid I have guessed right," thought she; "and, if it is so, what can be the end of it? However, Edward is sure to act honourably and conscientiously—and the rest is in the hands of Providence."

There were several people in the drawing-room when Annesley entered it with Egbert — Lady Ethelwode, Mademoiselle Juliani, and Mrs. Fanshaw, who had come to inquire after Miss Percival, and had been admitted contrary to her expectations; as Lady Ethelwode was tired of the dearth of news and gossip, which she had been obliged to suffer, whilst Ellen's danger made it

impossible to receive visitors. She was now, therefore, making up for it by talking and listening with as much animation as it was in her nature to feel, and astonishing Mrs. Fanshaw by her unusual graciousness.

Ellen sat apart from the group of talkers, in a large arm-chair by the fireside. She had fortunately been apprized by Egbert of his intention of bringing Edward to see her that morning; and, for the last hour, she had been listening for every footstep, and trying to master the emotion which made her tremble in every limb. Mrs. Fanshaw had just come towards her to take her leave as Edward entered, and Ellen was glad that her character of invalid dispensed her from rising, for she felt that it would have been impossible for her to stand.

"Really you do not look at all the worse for your illness," said Mrs. Fanshaw, looking at Ellen, whose cheeks were at that moment of the deepest crimson. "I shall not despair, after all, of seeing you at my little hop at Fanshaw Hall next Thursday."

Mrs. Fanshaw bustled away. Had she staid a moment longer, she would have retracted her opinion as to Ellen's looks, for the latter had sunk back in her chair, and her brilliant colour had given way to the paleness of death.

By the time, however, that Edward had saluted

Lady Ethelwode, and uttered the few sentences *d'usage*, Ellen had recovered some degree of calmness, and was able to receive, without any outward demonstrations of emotion beyond her slightly agitated manner, his heartfelt congratulations on her recovery. His look, his tone made her heart thrill—they certainly spoke of any thing but indifference. He took his seat by her side, and, after the first few minutes, her agitation and embarrassment gave way beneath the influence of his manner and conversation.

There was one question Ellen longed to ask. At length, after much hesitation, she said, in a low voice, and looking down, "I thought you told me, the day I saw you last, the day I was taken ill, that you were going away?"

"I did intend doing so then, but I could not leave Ethelwode whilst your life was in danger."

"And now, do you still intend going?"

"No; I have given up all thoughts of it for the present, at least, unless," added he, looking at her, "you yourself send me away."

Ellen raised her eyes to his for an instant, and then turned away with a deep blush. The fear which had bowed her down almost to the grave was suddenly lifted from her heart, and she felt that life might yet be a blessing. The half hour, at the end of which Edward had promised to come home to walk with Mrs. Allen, was long

past before he thought of moving. Ellen looked so beautiful, especially when a look of his called the colour to her transparent cheek, her manner was so fascinating in its languid gentleness, her low, faltering accents so full of music, that it is very doubtful to what indefinite period Edward would have extended the said half hour, if Louisa's arrival had not interrupted their conversation.

"I am just come from the parsonage," said she, as she shook hands with him, "and there I left poor Mrs. Allen cloaked and bonneted, and waiting for you to walk with her. She told me that you promised to be back an hour and a half ago, and, as she never knew you to forget a promise before, she was quite uneasy, and beginning to fancy some terrible disaster must have befallen you. I told her that I was coming here, and would accuse you in her name of being a false knight, and send you back to her forthwith."

"I am afraid I have prolonged my visit an unconscionable time," said Edward, looking as if he wished no one had reminded him of it, "and I must plead guilty of having wholly forgotten my engagement to walk with my mother. However, if I have not tired you, Miss Percival, I have no doubt I shall easily obtain her forgiveness."

"Oh! I am not the least tired," said Ellen; "I feel quite well to-day."

"Very likely, my dear Ellen," said Louisa. "Nevertheless, as you are not yet off Dr. Curewell's list, and I, as your nurse, am responsible to him for your proceedings, I put my veto against your exerting yourself any more to-day; so I shall send off Mr. Annesley to keep his engagement with Mrs. Allen, and insist on your going to lie down. And here is Dr. Curewell himself to enforce my injunctions."

Expostulation was now useless, and Edward made his escape before the doctor had got half way across the room. The doctor shook his head over Ellen's pulse, and looked with distrust on her brilliant colour and sparkling eyes, and recommended that his patient should be kept quite quiet, as she was still a little feverish.

"You see I was quite right to send him away," said Louisa, as she led Ellen to her room.

"Oh, Louisa, I was so happy!"

"Joy is sometimes as dangerous as grief," answered her friend; "and, as you do not seem to wish to die now, you had better be prudent for a little while to come. So now lie down, dearest, and I will read you to sleep if you like."

But Ellen wanted no book that day to lull her

into forgetfulness. Her own thoughts were bright companions, and Louisa, having ascertained this fact, left her to enjoy them in solitude.

Happiness did not prove hurtful in Ellen's case. Dr. Curewell was secretly amazed at the rapidity with which his patient improved in strength and looks. The golden perspective which the long convalescence he had anticipated had opened to him, became daily more faint; and, at the end of an incredibly short period, he was obliged to declare to Lady Ethelwode that his visits were become useless, and that Miss Percival's health was perfectly re-established. Perhaps he would not have wondered so much at the efficacy of his own remedies if he had known what a powerful ally his art had obtained in Mr. Annesley, who was again become a constant visitor at the castle.

Edward's days were now divided between the duties of his profession and those of Egbert's education, in which he had become too much interested to give it up to the care of another. But his evenings were almost always spent at the castle, and, each night when he left her, Ellen seemed to have recovered something of her former health, and gladness, and brilliancy.

There were some around her who had not the same motives for blindness as Dr. Curewell, who

were at no loss to assign the wonderful rapidity of her recovery to its true cause. The butler and housekeeper smiled and winked mysteriously when Miss Percival and Mr. Annesley were mentioned. The lady's-maid looked very wise on the subject, and even went so far as to hint that she thought *her* young lady might have done better. The village gossips rejoiced in their perspicacity in having guessed so rightly the cause of the young clergyman's depression of spirits during Ellen's illness. Every body, both at the castle and in the village, were convinced of their engagement, and discussing the when and where of the wedding before a word of love had been breathed between the parties concerned.

Two people, however, remained apparently totally ignorant and unconcerned about the affair which occupied all the other heads and tongues in the neighbourhood. These two people were Lord and Lady Ethelwode. Both liked Edward's society from different motives, and both equally encouraged his intimacy in their family—the gentleman because of the advantages Edward's companionship offered to his son—the lady because she was accustomed to him, and that his presence broke the *ennui* of a family party without putting her out of her way. Neither of them thought of Ellen—of the consequences to her of such an intimate intercourse with a man like Edward.

Lord Ethelwode never did think of his step-daughter. She had neither part nor lot in the glories of the ancient house of Ethelwode. She was an alien from his family, and was therefore nothing in his eyes but what she had been from the first hour of his marriage, a necessary appendage of his wife. The latter seldom thought of any thing at all. She was satisfied that Ellen was wondrously beautiful, because every body told her so, and she liked to look upon that beauty when she had nothing else to do. At times, some vague notions of Ellen's future success in London, of a brilliant establishment for her, floated across her brain ; but she was in no hurry to realize them. Meanwhile, Ellen might act, think, feel, as she liked ; her mother never saw any thing but what was pointed out to her, never heard any thing that was not addressed to her, never troubled herself about any thing that did not immediately concern her present ease and comfort.

She had been anxious about Ellen whilst she was ill, without inquiring into the cause of her illness ; she was satisfied now to see her recovering her health and beauty, without troubling herself to consider whether Dr. Curewell or Edward Annesley had most share in bringing the vivid colour back to her cheek, the light of gladness to her eye. She dozed away her existence as

usual; whilst Ellen, unwatched by a mother's love, unguided by a mother's experience, was yielding her heart, and mind, and soul, to the passion which was to make or mar the happiness of her whole existence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“By heaven! methinks it were an easy leap,
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon;
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned honour by the locks;
So he, that doth redeem her thence, might wear,
Without co-rival, all her dignities.”

Henry IV.

When Louisa returned home, she found a great improvement in Reginald's demeanour. The departure of St. John had first had a brightening effect upon him, and, strange as it may seem, the absence of Louisa herself had not been without a beneficial influence. He had been left to recover his sober senses free from all outward excitement, and gradually the fever of his mind subsided, and he became once more like his former self. Left *tête-à-tête* with Sir Charles Conway, there had also been more time for confidential conversation, than when the house had been full of guests, and he had gladly returned to all his old intimate intercourse with the man he revered as a father, and who had, indeed, been one to him, from his childhood upwards.

One day that they had been talking over his affairs, and the prospects he had of advancement in his profession, Sir Charles told him, that he had several times thought of a new plan for him, but that he had hesitated to propose it, as it involved some delay, which he did not know if his ward's impatience could brook. Reginald professed himself anxious to hear the proposition.

"I thought," said Sir Charles, "of proposing to you to give up, for the present, your views as a diplomate, and to turn your thoughts to home politics instead."

"But to what purpose?"

"In May, you know, there must be a dissolution of parliament, and if you choose to stand for H——, I have little doubt you would come in."

"But is not Lord Ethelwode's interest too strong for us?"

"No, I think not. When Mr. Davis was elected two years ago, it was a very near thing; and since then, Lord Caldwell has increased his property in the county, and I have also bought land from Mr. Fanshaw, which would certainly make us the strongest; and Lord Caldwell would be as glad as myself to see so warm an adherent as you are to the good cause represent parliament."

“Why do you not stand yourself? You, surely, would meet with hardly any opposition.”

“Perhaps not; but that does not suit me. I could, I know, have been re-elected for the county two years ago; but I gave it up, because my health was not strong enough to do the business in a conscientious manner; and, when I found Lord Hope’s eldest son was anxious to come in, and that our party would not lose a vote, I was glad to retire, and to have the opportunity of going abroad with Louisa. But now to the point; as far as you are concerned, what do you say to my plan?”

“It has always been the height of my ambition to get into parliament; but there are many months to wait, and my poverty stands, as much as my restless spirit, in the way of an idle life.”

“But why should it be an idle life? A man who goes into parliament, with a view to distinction, needs as much study, to fit himself for the office, as one who enters into any other profession; and as to your poverty, if you think your income incompetent to live in England, and to accept an unsalaried appointment, you forget that this house is your home; and though I honour a spirit of independence, the most fastidious could see nothing to cavil at, in your remaining under the roof which has been your home from childhood.”

"But, my dear sir, it is that very fact, of having lived so long under the shelter of your hospitable roof, which makes me feel it the more incumbent upon me to be a burden no longer."

"Unless your society be called a burden, either to Louisa or myself, I do not know what else you can mean. It is little my custom to make professions; therefore, when I tell you, my dear boy, that I should be sincerely distressed if ever my house ceased to be your home, until you had found a better one of your own, you will believe that I am perfectly sincere."

Reginald warmly grasped the hand which was held out to him.

"Your father was my oldest friend," resumed Sir Charles, "and, except my own darling child, I have no dearer tie on earth than that which he bequeathed to me, when he left you to my care; as long, therefore, as you are satisfied with a son's place, you will always find one both in my heart and in my house."

Reginald turned away deeply moved. Such words from Louisa's father had additional power to touch him. A son's place under that roof should be his. Oh, could he realize those words in the sense which his impassioned heart longed to give them! For a few minutes he yielded to the intoxicating influence of
but even when that passe

turned to the sober reality, life seemed to have assumed a brighter aspect; and when, after a long conversation with Sir Charles, it was decided that he should for the present abandon his profession, and wait in England till the elections, hope unconsciously stole into his heart.

He saw before him long months to be spent in Louisa's society, with every opportunity of making the progress he so much desired in her affections. St. John was gone, and absence would allow her more calmly to appreciate his character. He might yet hope to win the prize from his rival, though he still saw before him a long, long period, during which honour would enjoin a more strict silence than ever as to his real feelings. In her presence he should labour to fit himself for his new undertaking—in her presence he should wear the laurels which, in his strong hope, he doubted not to win—under the influence of her smiles and sympathy, he should climb the rugged ascent to fame; and then—then—and his heart nearly burst with the ecstasy of that thought—all his labour, all his struggles would be rewarded, when he brought the hard-earned wreath and laid it at her feet—when, with a rich harvest of honour, with a name blazoned by a nation's praises, he could ask from her lips the one word which would crown and sanctify all ambition's proudest triumphs.

Some may smile at Reginald's confidence, and deny their sympathy to one who trusted so proudly in his own strength. But such confidence is the earnest of success. Where is the eminent man who in his youth indulged not in proud dreams, which the dull plodders around him laughed to scorn? And it is only in this strong assurance of success, that the ambitious man can find energy to overcome the numberless obstacles in his path. It is a mysterious revelation of the yet untried soul, and it seems as though Heaven vouchsafed it to those who are destined to become the luminaries of their age, that, when the world frowns upon them, they may have some more unerring guide than the common experience or foresight of men, to give them the assurance that they shall reach the goal at last.

Reginald Talbot was not only endued with a bold and aspiring spirit, which would no doubt have ensured success in any path he might have chosen, but he was peculiarly fitted for the career which Sir Charles's offer had now opened to him. His strong, keen intellect was well adapted to search out Truth from amidst the labyrinth which party spirit and selfish contentions weave around us in political matters; and, having once discovered her, to follow boldly wherever she led, undeterred by mean fears, or unworthy consider-

ations of expediency. The gift of eloquence—that noble gift of Heaven—with which he was freely endowed, gave him the power to plead her cause worthily in the senate of a great people. It was, therefore, with unfeigned pleasure on both sides that Sir Charles's plan was agreed to—and it was whilst under the first bright influence of this change in his prospects that Reginald met Louisa on her return from Ethelwode, and delighted her with the change in his demeanour.

He was more than the Reginald of former days; for never yet was man under the influence of a lofty hope, without that influence stealing into every part of his being—even as the warm life-blood spreads from the heart to the remotest vein, shewing its beneficial effects in the whole bearing of the outward man. Louisa also returned with pleasure to the quiet of her usual life at Oaklands, to her favourite pursuits with her father, in which Reginald now frequently shared as formerly; and if in her inmost heart there sometimes arose a wish that *one* other were added to their happy circle, the wish was silent, and had no outward influence on her. Her manner was as calm as ever, her mind as keen in the pursuit of knowledge, perhaps more alive than ever to the love of the beautiful; and in this, more than in any thing else, might a searching eye

have seen a revelation of her unexpressed, unacknowledged feelings.

Reginald watched her narrowly, and with all the jealousy of passion; but even he could not discover that his rival was regretted, and he began to wonder at his own impetuous jealousy, which had magnified every trifle, and perhaps itself created the danger he had dreaded.

If, at breakfast, her eye was eagerly fixed on her father, as he opened the letter-bag, as if she half expected to hear some tidings of importance—and if the colour would occasionally mount to her cheek as she turned away when the hope was disappointed, Reginald saw it not; he was engaged with the papers, and she was ever ready to join in conversation when he laid them down—or if she sketched, by preference, every point in the beautiful scenery around, which St. John had been wont to admire, Reginald had not heard the praises, and she was always pleased that he should sit by her side while she drew; thus he was satisfied, whilst Louisa learnt her first lesson in woman's painful lot—that of devouring her heart in silence, and smiling the while.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Miranda. Do you love me?

Ferdinand. ————— I,

Beyond all limit of what else i' the world,

Do love, prize, honour you.

Miranda. I am a fool

To weep at what I'm glad of."

The Tempest.

About this time an event occurred which materially improved Edward Annesley's circumstances. A distant relation, the only one he had on his father's side, died and left him his property. Without being very large, it was sufficient to make him independent of his profession, and so enable him to think, without imprudence, of marrying before he had obtained a living. His heart beat high, as he thought that he could now, without rashness, ask Ellen to share his lot, which, if not brilliant, if below what her beauty and connexions might entitle her to expect, was, at least, one of honourable and comfortable independence.

Mr. Allen, who had not the feminine insight of his wife into his grandson's feelings, was as-

tonished at the joy with which Edward received the news of this accession of fortune — Edward, so disinterested, so philosophical!

“It is very strange,” said he to his wife, “very unaccountable, that a few hundreds a year more, added to what he always considered a sufficiency, should make Edward so happy. I never thought before that he cared for money.”

“No more he does now,” replied his wife, smiling, “only for the power that money gives.”

“Power! what power? what can you mean?”

“The power to marry, perhaps.”

“Power to marry! Edward wishing to marry! marry whom? Ah, Ellen Percival! now I see, now I understand. How strange that this should not have struck me before!”

Mrs. Allen smiled, and thought it would have been much more strange if it had struck him, inasmuch as half the time he never knew what was going on in his own room, and was not likely, therefore, to know the proceedings of his grandson and Ellen up at the castle.

“At all events,” said she, after a minute’s pause, “pray, do not speak to him about it, my dear. We must not forestall his confidence, and perhaps we may be mistaken.”

“No, we are right; I am sure of it now I think about it; of course, I shall not speak to

him, but I am sorry, very sorry. Ellen Percival is not a wife meet for Edward."

Mrs. Allen sighed as well as her husband, but she comforted herself with the reflection, that if Ellen really loved Edward, she was young enough and docile enough to be moulded into any thing he pleased; "and if she does not love him," said she, "she will not leave Ethelwode Castle to live in a parsonage on eight hundred a year, for his sake. So it will all turn out for the best."

Throughout all her long life, in spite of many trials and many sorrows, Mrs. Allen had never been known to think that any thing would turn out for the worst. She was an unbeliever in the power of evil; in her view, all things worked for good by a shorter or longer process. It was this faith which had ever made her be to her husband as an incarnation of Hope — a living sunbeam, throwing its cheering light over the darkest and most rugged places of the path of life.

Something of this faith was needed, at this time, by Edward also; for not even passion could wholly blind him to the fact, which was so clearly seen by his friends, as it had once been by himself, that Ellen was unfit for the life of a poor clergyman's wife. Fascinating as was now her very weakness, her very plasticity of character, inasmuch as they made her look up with deeper reverence, and cling with more trusting, more self-re-

nouncing confidence to him, he felt that these were not the qualities most desirable in a wife, one chosen to be his helpmate, to cheer, and strengthen, and assist, as well as to love and reverence him.

Then again he could not but feel that the lot he offered to her was homely and obscure, in comparison to that which had hitherto been her's, and the still more brilliant one she might reasonably look forward to, and that to her it would involve many sacrifices which she could not even estimate, till she was called upon to make them, and for which she was utterly unprepared, either by education or habits.

There was enough in such reflections as these to cloud over Edward's joy ; and they could not, at all times, be driven away, though he felt it was too late to dwell upon them now. He had erred deeply ; but now that the error was committed and irretrievable, the best and wisest course was to cast behind him all thoughts of what was past, and to direct all his efforts to avert the evil consequences which might follow from his imprudence, not only to himself, but what was of far greater moment in his eyes, to the young and trustful being whose happiness was thus thrown into his hands.

Notwithstanding his resolutions, however, some misgivings visited her mind, as he passed

through the magnificent suite of apartments to the room where Ellen generally spent her mornings, when the weather became too cold for her favourite retreat to the summer-house, and where he now sought her to decide upon his fate. As he looked around, the question involuntarily arose to his mind whether it was not madness to ask one who had been used, from infancy, to a home like this, to leave it for such a one as he had to offer.

This feeling grew upon him as he entered her room, which might, indeed, have seemed, to less interested eyes, to realize the very *beau-ideal* of luxurious comfort. It was one of the pleasantest apartments in the castle; small enough to be comfortable, yet lofty and well-proportioned. The sun was streaming in through the mullioned windows, shedding a rich glow on the carved oak panelling and the massive antique furniture. Ellen's harp and piano-forte stood open at one end; and her books, her music, her work, were scattered about in comfortable confusion. A stand of beautiful exotics shed the perfume of summer through the apartment, whilst a blazing fire corrected the chillness of the autumn air, which blew in through the open window.

Ellen herself was sitting by this fire, half buried in the cushions of an ample arm-chair, a book in her hand, and her eyes fixed on the sea, which lay calm and silvery in the sunshine.

She started up as Annesley entered, and the uneasy thoughts which had been tormenting him vanished, as he saw her brightening look, and the crimson blush which mantled on her cheek, at his appearance. A morning visit was an unusual thing from him, and he had interrupted her in the midst of a calculation of the number of hours which must elapse, before she could reasonably expect to see him. It was, moreover, the first time she had been alone with him since her illness, and her manner was anxious and embarrassed.

"I believe you never were in my den before," said she, after a few moments' silence, which she felt to be almost oppressive, and which she was glad to break by saying any thing.

"No; but it does not much resemble a den," said Annesley, looking round; "it might pass for a boudoir in the Castle of Indolence."

"It is comfortable, certainly, but not quite luxurious enough for that," said Ellen, talking on without much knowing what she was saying, for, in spite of herself, her heart was trembling with the consciousness that she was alone with him. "Its greatest charm to me is, that it is my exclusive domain, where no one ventures to intrude without especial permission."

"Then, I fear, I must be looked upon as an intruder, since I am here without permission asked or granted."

“No; I will not close my doors against you,” said Ellen, blushing. “As a master, you must have access to your pupil.”

“And, once admitted, have I also liberty to say what I please, and will you listen to me?”

Annesley's look and tone said more than his words. A strange sort of fear came over Ellen, an undefined, thrilling sensation, painful, from its intensity, though mingled with pleasure, which made her long to entreat him to stop, to pause, to let her enjoy the present hour, before he uttered any thing that might break the spell of enchantment in which she lived, and could scarcely make her more happy. For the first time, she shrank from him almost with fear; the words which hung upon his lips, and which she could not arrest, seemed to give him a mysterious power. She could not answer him; but neither could she conceal her consciousness. She *felt* that his eyes were fixed upon her, and she tremblingly turned away, that she might avoid the glance that she dared not meet.

“Ellen,” said Annesley, in his low, earnest voice, “Ellen, do not turn away from me. Surely you cannot dread to hear what I have got to say: surely you will not refuse to listen now to my avowal of the love which, though unuttered, must have been long known to you. Tell

me that I have not deceived myself in my hope ; speak but one word."

Ellen could not speak that word ; she could not tell him what she was then feeling in her heart of hearts—that it was the assurance of that love, legible in his looks and manner, which had brought her back from the confines of the grave ; but the small white hand, which he had taken, and which rested tremblingly in his, returned the pressure. Edward asked no more, and gave way to the full tide of passion which was struggling for utterance in his heart.

"And now, Ellen," said he, in conclusion, "can you, will you, accept such a lot as I have to offer ? It is only to-day that I have acquired the right to ask you this ; it is only to-day that I have had it in my power to offer you any home, however humble. Tell me, now, if love can beautify such a home in your eyes—if it can repay you for all the luxury, the splendour you would sacrifice for it?"

Ellen did not speak, but she turned to him with one of those looks which seem suddenly to reveal the inner depths of the heart to him who meets them. There was no need of words ; Edward felt that volumes could not have answered him so well as that one look.

"My generous, noble-minded Ellen ! *My* Ellen ! say that I may call you mine—my own !"

And Ellen's eyes again told him, far better than her few scarcely audible words, that her heart, her soul, her very existence, were his—his, as they had been, long before he sought to win them—his only—his ever!

We will not attempt to describe these first moments of scarcely earthly happiness, when every barrier which had separated them was removed, and heart was revealed to heart in all the fulness of mutual love. What would it avail to give the mere words that were uttered, when the looks, the expression, which gave them meaning and eloquence, cannot be conveyed? Let such reader picture these moments to himself, as memory or imagination may suggest.

* * * * *

When Edward, at length, rose to take his leave, it was agreed, between them, that he should come that evening, as usual. That evening should be one of perfect enjoyment to them both; and, the next day, Edward should make his formal proposals to Lady Ethelwode. Both foresaw that they should have difficulties and obstacles to encounter, and they were glad to have this one day to enjoy their happiness without any mixture of care or anxiety.

How delicious was that evening, as they sat apart, in one of the deep recessed windows, watching together the autumn moon rising slowly over

the sea ; that first evening of full and perfect confidence—of unrestrained communion. It was, during that evening, that Ellen told all to Edward—her love so long unknown, even to herself—her agony when she thought he was leaving her for ever—her misery—her humiliation—her struggles ; and how fervently did Edward vow that his life should be devoted to efface every trace of the suffering he had brought upon her ! Was it not already forgotten ? Was she not already repaid for sickness, and sorrow, and humiliation, and heart-wearing suspense, as she sat there beside him—her hand in his—listening to his bright picturings of their future home ; of the long pilgrimage they were to tread together, and which their mutual love was to cheer and bless, in weal or woe, with the heart's own sunshine !

During this evening, it was agreed upon by the lovers, that Ellen should herself inform her mother of her engagement. She knew her mother well ; she had that influence over her, which those who feel strongly always possess over the indolent and shallow-hearted ; and she wisely thought, that she could much better than Edward answer Lady Ethelwode's objections, tranquillize the alarm which she always felt at any unusual event, and win her over to receive Edward's proposals, with due benignity and approbation.

For this purpose she sought her mother's dressing-room next morning at an earlier hour than usual. Lady Ethelwode was lying on her sofa, with a large piece of tapestry-work in her hands, whilst Mademoiselle Juliani was kneeling beside her on the floor, sorting different shades of lambs-wool, from a large basket before her. The attendant's face was flushed with the exhaustion of kneeling so long, but the indolent fine lady did not seem to perceive her fatigue, and went on giving her directions in her usual drawling tone of voice.

"Now find me some pinks for these roses, Mademoiselle, four shades ;—no, those will not do, will they? I think they are too dark; look at that other bundle. Dear me, what a fatiguing business this sorting shades is!" and Lady Ethelwode threw herself back on her pillows, whilst Mademoiselle Juliani stooped again over the basket, to look for a third time, for the required colours.

"Mamma," said Ellen, as she kissed her mother's forehead, "I am sure Mademoiselle Juliani must be very tired with kneeling so long; let me sort the rest of your shades for you."

"You, my dear! oh, you do not understand any thing about it. Mademoiselle Juliani is not tired; she is never tired, are you, Mademoi-

selle? I cannot let any one else do it, the colours will be sorted all wrong."

"I assure you, mamma, I can do it perfectly well. Just let me try, whilst Mademoiselle Juliani goes to rest herself a little. Now go, Mademoiselle," she added, taking the basket, "I will do every thing mamma wants, till you come back."

Just then, in spite of her sore knees and aching back, the *dame de compagnie* would have liked to remain, for she concluded rightly, that this unwonted eagerness of Ellen's to relieve her from her attendance on Lady Ethelwode was not without some adequate motive, and that motive she was curious to discover. However, Ellen insisted on taking her place, and she was obliged reluctantly to withdraw, and leave the mother and daughter alone.

"Mamma, I sent Mademoiselle Juliani away, because I want to speak to you," said Ellen, as soon as the door was closed.

"Speak to me, my dear? what can you have to say to me, that Mademoiselle Juliani must not hear?"

"A great deal, mamma, if you will just listen to me quietly and kindly, will you, dear mother?"

"Of course I shall listen to you, child, though I cannot conceive what you can have to say,

that can make you look so solemn; I hope it will not be long, for I am dreadfully tired already, and these lambs-wools are not half sorted yet."

It was rather difficult, after this opening, to begin such a tale as Ellen's, and the tears rose to the poor girl's eyes at her mother's coldness; however, collecting herself with an effort, she told Lady Ethelwode, in as few words as possible, of her's and Edward's mutual attachment, of his improved prospects, and of his intention of coming that day to ask formally for her hand.

Nothing could exceed Lady Ethelwode's astonishment at this unexpected intelligence. The idea of Edward Annesley—Mr. Allen's grandson and curate—becoming Ellen's lover, had never once entered her head. The possibility of Ellen's marrying had indeed visited her mind, as a vague and remote contingency, and the thought had always been accompanied with visions of titles and coronets, presentation at court, and family diamonds. She had been used every year, since Ellen emerged from childhood, to hear her friend, Lady Frances, predict the brilliant establishment which her beauty was to obtain for her, and the sensation her appearance would produce in London. She had gradually accustomed herself to the thoughts of going to

town, when Ellen should have reached her eighteenth year, to bring her out, and realise these brilliant expectations; and now, just a few months before the long thought-of period, all these splendid visions were destroyed, by Ellen's untoward avowal, and a poor country curate stood up to claim the hand, which dukes and earls were to have striven for.

"My dear Ellen, I am so surprised, so astonished! I really am quite bewildered," she said, as Ellen ended her earnest appeal; "of course, you cannot marry Mr. Annesley, a poor curate; it was very foolish of you to engage yourself in such a hurry, and so I must tell him, you know, when he comes."

"Mother, for Heaven's sake, do not speak so! do not decide at once against him without a moment's consideration. Listen to me: I love Edward Annesley; I have long loved him beyond any other human being, and I solemnly declare that, if I do not marry him, no power shall induce me ever to marry another."

"My dear Ellen, do not be so violent, and talk such nonsense. What can have put it into your head to fall in love, like a heroine in a novel, and with a poor curate, too?"

"Mr. Annesley is not a poor curate," replied Ellen, suppressing the scornful smile which the first part of her mother's question had called

up; "he is rich enough to be independent of his profession, and many, with smaller means, and far less talent, have risen from a lower station to the highest dignities of the church."

"That is true, to be sure," said Lady Ethelwode, brightening up; "several who are on the bench now have risen from being tutors in noblemen's families. Mr. Annesley is very clever, and might rise like them; I should not mind your being the wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury; he walks before all the peers, you know, next to the royal family. His wife takes no rank, however; that is very unfortunate:—still you would be the mistress of Lambeth Palace, and I should not mind living there myself. It is a pity Mr. Annesley refused to be your brother's tutor; Lord Ethelwode might have done a great deal for him, and you could have waited quietly till Egbert had done with him."

"Lord Ethelwode will do much more for him, as his connexion," said Ellen, "when you have accepted him as your son-in-law; and you will, dearest mother, only say that you will."

"My dear, I am sure I have no objection to Mr. Annesley himself; he is a very comfortable person to have in the house, for he is so quiet, and never puts me out of my way; but what will Lady Frances say, who always predicted

you would marry a duke before the end of your first season?"

"What can it signify what Lady Frances or any one else will say? What would be the advantage of my marrying the first duke in the land, if I could not love him? what would you gain by seeing me miserable in a palace, instead of happy in an humbler home? Oh, mother, do not sacrifice your child's happiness to such idle vanity!"

"My dear Ellen, I am sure I have no wish to sacrifice your happiness, though I think you are very childish to think you must have love in a cottage to make you happy. I never was in love in my life, nor lived in a cottage, yet I have always been very happy; why cannot you be the same? However, if you are bent upon marrying Mr. Annesley, I suppose you must do as you like, though it is a great pity such beauty as your's should be buried in a parsonage."

Ellen threw her arms round her mother's neck, and thanked her with tears. She was too happy just then even to feel the coldness of Lady Ethelwode's embrace, and the languid indifference with which she spoke of the event which was to take from her her only daughter. The latter took no further notice of her emotion, than by saying:

"I wish you would get rid of that foolish trick of crying on all occasions, my dear Ellen; I assure you, it will quite spoil your eyes. Now go, that's

a good child ; and send back Mademoiselle Juliani, or these lambs-wools will not be sorted before Mr. Annesley comes."

Before the hour which Edward had fixed for his visit, Lady Ethelwode had managed to reconcile herself completely to the change in Ellen's prospects. The timely recollection that her daughter's marriage would save her a journey to London, and the dreadful fatigue of chaperoning her through a season, greatly conduced to this desirable result. On one point, however, she was firm ; she would not hear of Ellen marrying a *curate*. Edward must obtain a living ; it was the first step of the ladder which was to lead to an archbishopric, and she could not, and would not, let Ellen marry till some approach, at least, had been made to the dazzling vision of clerical honours she had conjured up, as a substitute for the long-dreamt-of strawberry-leaves which were to have graced Ellen's brow.

The lovers easily acquiesced in this condition ; more especially as Lord Ethelwode, who had by no means so high an opinion of Ellen's pretensions as her mother, had approved of the match, and promised to exert his interest in Annesley's favour. The delay of a few months, to be spent in each other's society, and with hope to brighten their way in the interval, did not seem, even to them, a very formidable obstacle to their happiness.

CHAPTER XX.

“ We have been friends together,
In sunshine and in shade;
Since first beneath the chestnut trees
In infancy we played.
But coldness now dwells in thy heart,
A cloud is on thy brow;
We have been friends together,—
Shall a light word part us now ?”

MRS. NORTON.

There are epochs in human existence when we seem to live years, in the space of a few days; and we count time, not by the regular vibrations of a pendulum, but by the wild succession of thoughts and feelings that overflow the soul. Such was the present to Edward Annesley and his beautiful betrothed.

To Ellen a new life had opened, and all her bright capabilities were tuned to happiness, and ready to seize each moment of joy; whilst Edward, under the genial influence of her warm, trustful affection, gradually lost the tinge of melancholy and self-reproach which had clouded the earlier period of his love, and yielded his whole soul to hope and gladness. The prospect

of a living was as distant as ever ; but otherwise the course of their true love ran perfectly smooth. Lady Ethelwode had become quite reconciled to Ellen's bad match, since it promised to save her a vast deal of trouble ; and the Allens (whatever misgivings they might have had at first concerning the prudence of Edward's choice), had forgotten them beneath the influence of Ellen's winning and affectionate manner. Who, indeed, young or old, could withstand the witchery of Ellen's smile, or the eloquence of her deep, sunny eyes ? None, at least, when she was present, could believe that any moral imperfection existed where the spirit's tenement was so faultlessly beautiful.

Thus some weeks passed away. At Oaklands, also, on the whole, that time had flown peacefully by, though fitful gleams of disappointment and dejection had disturbed Reginald's serenity. He had deluded himself with the thought that, with a heart engrossed by passion, he could enjoy peace, and he awoke from his vain dream, and found that though it was a certainty of bliss to be by Louisa's side, to see her day by day, to be able to engross her attention and conversation, to share in her themes and pursuits, still he needed something more, and that *something* was forbidden. More than once, when some affectionate word from her, some touch of feeling or

manner warmer than usual, or some expression of tender anxiety about him, when she saw him plunged in one of his dejected moods, had roused his feelings almost beyond controul, he was on the point of pouring out his whole heart to her, but his habitual sense of honour closed his lips again, and he would leave her astonished at his sudden gust of passion and mysterious abruptness.

In one of these dangerous moments he had so far betrayed himself, as to confess that he loved; and that it was that love, which, thwarted by circumstances, made him thus wayward and irritable; and Louisa had read the secret of his heart enough to see that it was his pride, revolting against his poverty and obscurity, which created the greatest obstacle in his path. Of the real truth, she read nothing. No possibility of Reginald's becoming more than a brother to her had ever crossed her mind; and now that the change might have been more apparent, it was, perhaps, her own preoccupation which blinded her.

One day they had been riding together, and their conversation had flowed more evenly than usual, and, as in former days, had ranged over subjects, in which both took an interest, and which called the mind into action, without touching the dangerous chord of passion, when

on their way home they met Annesley and Ellen walking together.

"Have you been very far?" asked Ellen, as they stopped to exchange greetings.

"No," answered Louisa, "we have taken a very quiet ride, and have rather exercised our tongues than our horses. I need not ask where you have been; the fresh sea-breeze has left a token of its passage in your brilliant colour. If I were Mr. Annesley, I should take you every day to the beach," added she, gazing with affectionate admiration at Ellen's countenance, which was, indeed, radiant at that moment with beauty and happiness.

"By the way, Miss Percival," said Reginald, "I think a great admirer of yours is just returned to these parts. We saw the gates of the abbey wide open as we passed, and the house looked as if it was inhabited."

"I suppose Lord Caldwell is come down for the hunting season," said Ellen, stealing a glance at Louisa. "But what do you mean about his being an admirer of mine?"

"Ah! thereby hangs a tale," said Louisa, smiling. "However, you need not be jealous, Mr. Annesley; the conquest was so rapidly made, that it is not likely to have any lasting effects."

So saying, she rode on with her companion,

but not before both had seen the look with which Ellen turned to Annesley, telling, in the eyes' most eloquent language, that all fears might be drowned in perfect security.

"Annesley is a happy man," exclaimed Reginald, after a short silence; "and, admitting the truth of all that your father said about his choice, what calculations of prudence could give the joy of one such look as that?"

"Is that your *constant* belief?" asked Louisa.

"It is my sober belief; in my best moods, yet"

"Yet you would yourself sacrifice Love at the shrine of Ambition, or to the paltry shame of poverty. Is it not so?"

"Louisa!" exclaimed Reginald, startled at her thus putting his thoughts before him.

"Now do not be angry, Reginald. I thought I gathered as much from your words once, some time ago, and they seemed to reveal the secret of the inward struggle, which I cannot but see agitates you continually; but I did not mean to hurt you by alluding to it."

"Louisa, you are torturing me," said her companion, in a hollow voice; "you do not know what I suffer daily, hourly. But you *shall* know," he proceeded, vehemently; "you have yourself urged me to it, and you must now hear me. Will you, then, despise me, or will you ..."

"Reginald, you are talking wildly. How or why should I despise you?—you, on whose honour and integrity I would stake my life?"

"Yet at this moment, perhaps, I am acting, I am going to act dishonourably. I will think of it again; then, if I open my whole soul to you, Louisa, remember what you have now said."

"I cannot but remember it; and, although I do not understand you, I can safely promise that nothing you can tell me will alter my earnest wish to do any thing, every thing that is in my power to diminish your sufferings, which it has, indeed, Reginald, grieved me sorely to witness."

They had by this time reached the house, and, as Reginald assisted Louisa to dismount, he warmly pressed her hand, in token of thankfulness for her last words. As they entered the hall, she stopped to look at some cards which had been left on the table since they went out. They were Lord Caldwell's, and Mr. St. John's.

"Mr. St. John!" she exclaimed aloud; and her sparkling eyes and heightened colour betrayed her sudden emotion.

Reginald heard the words, and saw the change of her countenance. The hope but so lately re-kindled within him vanished at once, and, without saying a word, he left her abruptly, and ran to his own room, to meditate in solitude over this bitter confirmation of all his fears.

She had, then, deceived him. No; he had deceived himself; he had hoped against the evidence of his senses, of his reason; he had wilfully blinded himself. And now that look had revealed the truth; that one look was enough to him, who knew well how strong the tide of emotion must be in Louisa's heart, ere she betrayed it to the glance of others. There was madness in the tumult of thought which followed this conviction; and, when that had somewhat subsided, he felt it was necessary to come to some decision, some settled plan of action. At one time he resolved to declare his passion, to dispute the prize openly with his detested rival. Then, as he recollected her feelings, he determined to leave England for ever; he could not breathe the same air with St. John, tread the same soil which he trod in happiness and triumph.

Doubts of St. John's truth flashed across his mind. Did he really love her? Was he even capable of strong affection, affection worthy of Louisa? And Reginald's blood boiled at the thought that any man should dare to win her love, and then cast away the inestimable treasure with scorn and indifference! This was the most enduring, and the bitterest of all his conflicting thoughts. From the first moment of his meeting St. John at Lady Ethelwode's ball, when the conversation he had heard respecting

him recurred so painfully to his mind, he had seemed to have an almost intuitive feeling of St. John's unworthiness, and he now almost lost the selfishness of his own passion, in his fears for the happiness of her he loved. He resolved that, at whatever cost to himself, he would warn her of the danger she was incurring, and then, if he found his warning vain, he felt that there remained no alternative for him but to leave her for ever.

It was with every nerve strained to the pitch of this resolution that he met her again at dinner; his whole deportment was changed; and she gazed in sorrowful astonishment at his stern, misery-stricken countenance. Wounded pride had a share in her feelings, when she found that all her affectionate endeavours to recall him to a happier mood were met by repelling, almost haughty, coldness. Her father's presence, however, was a check upon them both, and the evening passed quietly, though gloomily away.

Sir Charles was the first to retire; and Louisa, tired of the moroseness of her companion, prepared to follow him; but, as she was leaving the room, Reginald, who had been standing as if undecided, suddenly caught hold of her hand, saying, in an agitated tone—

“You must not leave me yet, Louisa. I must speak to you—a few words only.”

"As many as you like, my dear Reginald," replied Louisa, hoping that he would now return to a gentler mood, and putting her candle down, she returned to the fireplace. "I only wish," she continued, "that I could do any thing to restore you to your former peace of mind."

"It is not of myself I wish to speak now," said Reginald, in an altered tone; "I was in a dream; I mistook my own nature when I thought I could endure to lay my heart bare to the pity of any human being."

Louisa was startled at this new change, and looked anxiously at him. He could not meet her eye, and turned away. She said nothing; and, after a short pause, he continued—

"Pity is too nearly allied to contempt for me; therefore, I will still suffer in silence; the days when you could feel *with* me are over. Do not interrupt me," he cried, seeing that she was about to speak. "I know what you would say; but I am no boy, to be flattered or soothed by soft words. No; I will meet and abide the storm alone. It is of *you* that I would speak now."

"Of me!" said Louisa, in a tone of mingled surprise and displeasure.

"Yes, of you; and you *must* hear me. It is the last time you will hear aught that is disagreeable from my lips, for I am going to leave you."

"Leave me! Leave Oaklands! What can take you away so suddenly?"

"No matter. I can stay no longer. To-morrow I shall be gone; but I cannot, will not leave you, without warning you against one who has crept, as a serpent, across your path, and may poison all its flowers—as he has poisoned all my future existence!" added he, in a muttered tone, whilst his firm set teeth, and compressed lips, betrayed the inward struggle.

"You deal overmuch in metaphors for my plain understanding," said Louisa, in proud displeasure; for his manner had gradually become too overbearing to be quietly endured by one whose great defect was the want of that gentleness by which a woman can soothe and overrule man's wildest storm of passion.

"Then I will speak plainly," said Reginald, fixing his searching glance upon her face, which became crimson as he proceeded; "I allude to Arthur St. John. Do you understand me now?"

Louisa's eye sank, for a moment, beneath his; the next she returned his gaze, with a proud indignation. Reginald continued—

"I speak of St. John, who, under the mask of qualities he does not possess, has dazzled even your acute mind, and surprised your judgment; of the shallow, worldly-minded being, who, incapable of disinterested affection himself, has

dishonourably striven to win a treasure he can neither appreciate nor repay. I speak of him."

"Speak of him no more!" exclaimed Louisa, in as calm a tone as she could command. "It is unworthy of you, insulting to me. I do not know what has made you so often try to impress me with a bad opinion of Mr. St. John, but I do know that this manner of forcing your opinion upon me is most unwelcome, and I do not choose to submit to it. Mr. St. John is my relation; he has been my father's guest, and as such was entitled to as much attention as my father and myself saw fit to show him. What more his agreeable qualities, his talents, and his invariable desire to please, may have gained for him, I do not consider myself accountable for to Mr. Talbot. Had my father seen any thing to reprove in my manner, he would have told me so; as *he* has been silent on the subject, I beg that it may not be recurred to by *you*!"

Louisa turned to leave the room; but Reginald rushed after her, and, forcibly seizing her hand, led her back to the sofa.

"Louisa! we cannot part thus!" he exclaimed, in a tone of deep emotion; he paused, and then proceeded more calmly, "I have offended you; and that you have thus hastily taken offence, proves to me, but too clearly, the justice of my fears. But I have done. I have attempted to open your eyes; I have given you a brother's warning; it is the last act of that brotherly affection which you once valued. Louisa! I implore you—I, who would sacrifice every hope of my life to shield you from evil, I implore you to

think of what I have said; to gather up the strength of your well-regulated mind to oppose the inroads of an ill-placed affection, at least till you have reflected, till you have weighed the consequences! I am offending you again," continued he more vehemently, as he caught her haughty glance for a moment fixed upon him; "yet you *must* hear me; then think of me as you will. I shall be far away; the tie between us is broken; circumstances are such; but, no matter for what cause; your home can never be my home again; even these dear walls will be *his*, and should ——" He could not finish the picture his jealous forebodings conjured up. "I will never cross *his* threshold!" he added. "This, then, is a solemn parting, Louisa; I go forth on my cheerless path; yes, cheerless, although it should lead to glory, for even glory is now dimmed to my view, and I would fain think that I leave you in a peaceful, a happy one."

Louisa was softened by these last words; their melancholy tone went to her heart.

"Why should you go, Reginald?" said she, in a kinder voice; "why must you leave us so soon? I do not wish to pry into your confidence, but this is a sudden resolution; is it irrevocable?"

"Yes, irrevocable; I have hesitated too long already. Had I gone before this man's return, we might have parted in peace."

"It is your own will that raises Mr. St. John as a barrier between us," said Louisa, her pride again roused by his words. "I should understand you better, it would be more honourable,

if you were candidly to state what you really *know* against him, instead of retrenching yourself in these dark insinuations."

"I know no *facts* against him," replied Reginald; "but enough of the general tone of his character to feel sure that he is unworthy of you; and the very loftiness, the very purity of your mind, makes you unable to discern his unworthiness. His talents, I allow, his brilliancy, his power of pleasing, I am fully awake to," he continued, in a tone which grew more bitter, as he enumerated his rival's qualities, "but there is a feeling which sometimes enables us intuitively to read the hearts of others, and thus have I read his, and looked on in agony whilst——"

"Stop, Reginald; I will hear no more. If you have no weightier accusations to bring against Mr. St. John, I see nothing to justify the manner in which you have spoken of him, and I do not choose to listen to any more remarks upon myself."

"Then I have done," said Reginald, starting up; "I have fulfilled an odious task, but honour bound me to perform it. Now it is at an end, and with it the intercourse, the friendship of years; for, I repeat it, the tie between us is broken. Childhood and its happy dreams are passed; its sweetness has forsaken me at the very threshold of life. Louisa, sister, friend, dearest companion of all my happiest days, farewell! How changed must be all within and around us, before we can meet again!"

He grasped her hand, and pressed it fervently between his, and hastily left the room.

It was not till some minutes after his abrupt departure that Louisa could collect herself sufficiently to think calmly over this strange and painful scene. As she recalled his last words, and the tone in which they had been spoken, she could not but repent her own harshness and pride. She felt that, however displeasing his manner of declaring his sentiments, they were those of one whose integrity she could not doubt, and who had loved her with a brother's affection from her childhood upwards. Wounded at his reading the feeling she would have concealed even from herself; wounded by his opinion of one who had appeared to her invested with every bright and noble quality; offended by his impetuous manner, yet touched by his evident misery, and the tone of deep feeling which ran through all he said, and which could not be mistaken—the proud girl wept bitter tears from all these contending emotions.

At one moment she would have recalled her old and tried friend, that she might part from him, at least, in peace. At another, she almost felt glad that one who had so accurately read her inmost heart was there to scrutinize it no longer, or to humble her with the sense of another's knowledge of her kindness. But this unworthy feeling could not long sway a heart more affectionate even than it was proud. She recurred again to his parting words, to the struggle he had evidently gone through before he could bring himself to hurt her feelings, and she longed to see him again, to atone for her harshness. Then she remembered how often she had seen him

swayed, for a time, by a violent passion, which passed away without any further result, and she trusted that this sudden determination to depart would prove equally transitory.

She could not believe that he had so suddenly altered his plans, that he really meant to go abroad, as his words seemed to imply; nor could she conceive that St. John's return — although the ostensible cause of his anger — could be a sufficient motive to induce him to banish himself from his early home. Once, and once only, in this tumult of conflicting feelings, a suspicion of the truth flashed across her mind. But she instantly drove it away; she had been so long used to look upon him only as a brother, that the idea of regarding her with any other than brotherly affection, seemed to her utterly improbable, and she blushed at the momentary thought. She remained long in the same spot where he had left her, lost in the painful emotions his words had awakened; and it was not till many hours after she had sought rest on her pillow that sleep came to end a day in which one moment of delight and hope had been balanced by so much that was harassing and agitating. The last distinct image on her mind was Reginald, repenting of his resolution and meeting St. John with a cordial greeting. But the vision was false. When she awoke in the morning, the sun was high in the horizon, and Reginald was already far from Oaklands.

A letter to Sir Charles accounted for his sudden departure, by saying that he had heard from an old and dear college friend, who was ill and

very anxious to see him, and he had, therefore, made no delay in going to him. He said nothing of the future, and Sir Charles, though secretly surprised and dissatisfied, made no further comment on the letter than supposing that he would soon return.

Louisa could not echo his words, but she had not courage to contradict them, and strove to persuade herself that they would prove true. She could not relate to her father the scene of the past evening; she could not speak of her own feelings, nor tell how accurately Reginald had read them, and her lips would have refused to utter his opinion of St. John. She resolved, however, that she would, at least, so far follow his advice as to study Mr. St. John's character, calmly and carefully, before she allowed herself to yield any further to his influence; and thus hoping that all might yet be well, she remained silent upon the past.

END OF VOL. I.

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PRINTER TO H.R.H. PRINCE ALBERT.



PASSION AND PRINCIPLE.

A NOVEL.

EDITED BY

CAPT. FREDERICK CHAMIER, R.N.

“ Our acts our angels are, or good or ill
The fatal shadows that pursue us still.”

JOHN FLETCHER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PASSION AND PRINCIPLE.

CHAPTER I.

"Is't possible that, on so little acquaintance, you should like her? that, but seeing, you should love her? and, loving, woo? and, wooing, she should grant?"—*As you like it.*

"Who dines here to-day?" asked Ellen, who had come to stay at Oaklands for a while, shortly after Reginald's departure, as she and Louisa were going up to their rooms one evening to dress for dinner; "you have a large party, have you not?"

"Yes, a host of people; all the magnates of the land, I believe."

"I asked for information," said Ellen, smiling, "that I might suit my toilette to the occasion. But who are the people? I suppose I know them all."

"Oh, yes! there are Lord and Lady Littledale, and Mr. and Miss Littledale."

"Four of a family!" interrupted Ellen; "a bad omen, Louisa, for the pleasantness of your party."

"It cannot be helped in the country, you know; at least, we who are not quite so comfortably indifferent as Lord and Lady Ethelwode to the good or ill graces of our neighbours, cannot help it. People are affronted if, at least, one son and daughter

ter are not invited. Then, to go on with my list; there are Sir Anthony and Lady Dashwood; Mr. and Mrs., and Miss Fanshaw—”

Ellen groaned. “My dear Louisa, *quelle corvée!* and is that all?”

“No; comfort yourself, my dear. There is Mr. Annesley, *of course*, and Mr. Hope; Mr. St. John and Lord Caldwell, whom, by the way, you do not know.”

“No; but I shall really be glad to see this ‘favourite aversion’ of my good stepfather’s. He has been held up to me as a *bête noire* ever since I was a child; and I am curious to judge for myself what the monster is like.”

“As unlike a monster as possible,” said Louisa. “He is peculiarly agreeable and gentlemanlike, though there is a half sneer always in his tone, which rather spoils one’s enjoyment of his conversation. You can pass over such slight defects, however, in favour of his being a great admirer of your’s.”

“I recollect your saying that once before, but I could not imagine why, as, to my knowledge, I never saw Lord Caldwell in my life.”

“Perhaps not; but he saw you one day on the beach several months ago, and raved about you to my father and myself; from his description we knew at once that it could be no one but you.”

“I am sure I am highly flattered,” said Ellen, laughing, as she turned into her own room.

She was more flattered, perhaps, than she would have quite liked Louisa to know; and her maid remarked that she was unusually particular about her dress that evening. “To be sure,” as her maid said to herself, after she was gone down, “it’s

worth while taking trouble to dress such a lady as that; she did look so beautiful in her clothes when they were on!"

Lord Caldwell and St. John arrived before the rest of the party. It was the first time Louisa and St. John had met since his return, and Ellen could not help watching her friend's countenance, as he eagerly advanced to greet her. At first, there was a deep blush on Louisa's cheek, and a slight degree of nervousness in her manner, but it passed away almost before it could be perceived, and she returned his greeting with calm friendliness. St. John was disappointed, and drew back almost angrily, as she turned from him immediately, to introduce Lord Caldwell to Ellen.

If Lord Caldwell had thought Ellen beautiful when he saw her on the beach, heated and flushed with exercise, he thought her almost divine now in the brilliant candlelight, and with all the adventitious aid of dress. His cold, keen, grey eye lighted up into something like warmth of expression, as it wandered over that face so faultless in its classic lineaments, that form which seemed the very incarnation of the poetry of motion. He had been a sojourner in most of the capitals of Europe, and had seen beautiful women of every nation, but none had ever struck him like Ellen. There was something so pure, so radiant in her loveliness, that she seemed to him more like a dream of his long-forgotten youth, than any thing actually living and moving amongst the realities of this prosaic world.

For the first time in his life, the hard, cold, calculating statesman felt himself thrill beneath a woman's glance. He smiled inwardly at his own emotion, yet he shrank from breaking the spell by

speaking to her. The conversation of a young lady in her teens (a thing he ever held in utter abhorrence) must, he thought, infallibly destroy the *prestige* of her wondrous beauty. However, when he did speak to her, and when Ellen's rich, musical tones fell upon his ear, he was forced to acknowledge, like every one else who had ever heard them, that there was a witchery in her voice scarcely less powerful than that of her beauty; and he immediately sat down beside her, and exerted himself to draw her into conversation.

Ellen was evidently flattered by his attention, and she repaid his efforts with her brightest smiles. He remarked, however, that her eyes often wandered round the room with a restless glance, as if seeking some one who was not there. He was appealing to her for her opinion on some subject on which he had been talking, and was surprised to find his appeal unanswered, when he saw her countenance suddenly light up as with a ray of sunshine, and on following the direction of her eyes, he saw that they were fixed on a young man in black, who was making his way towards them.

"Who the devil is this?" thought Lord Caldwell to himself, as the stranger drew near, and took Ellen's proffered hand, whilst a few words of familiar greeting passed between them. He was piqued at Ellen's attention being given to another whilst he thought fit to honour her with his, and was on the point of resigning his seat to the new-comer, when Annesley, who shrunk with the sensitiveness of a high-wrought mind from any exhibition of feeling in public, and held his love for Ellen as too holy a thing to be exposed to the observation and comments of a gossiping neighbourhood, turned

away and joined a group of talkers at the other end of the room.

"May I ask who is that gentleman?" asked Lord Caldwell, when Ellen turned again towards him.

"That is Mr. Annesley," answered she, blushing as she spoke, as if, in pronouncing his name, she revealed the tie that made it a spell to her.

"And who is he?"

"The grandson of our rector, Mr. Allen, and his curate for the present."

At this moment dinner was announced, and Lord Caldwell was forced to leave Ellen to offer his arm to Lady Dashwood. At table, however, he was glad to find himself again placed beside her. He soon found that it was useless to dwell with her upon the usual common-place topics of fashionable conversation; for she was ignorant of the very names of the people he alluded to. His brilliant anecdotes, his piquant *bon-mots*, were lost upon her, for she wanted the key to them all. There was something refreshing to the *blazé* man of the world in this utter ignorance, and still more in the frank and almost childlike ingenuousness of her manner. He looked with additional pleasure on her beauty whose purity and freshness seemed a symbol of the mind within; the hot breath of the world had as yet tainted neither. He turned, with easy fluency, to more general subjects. He had travelled a great deal, as we have said before, and had the heart of relating well what he had seen; and he had the satisfaction of seeing Ellen's countenance, which had retained its seriousness whilst listening to his most brilliant witticisms, brighten into animation as he described what was interesting and beautiful in the scenes he had visited.

Still, though Ellen was amused and interested, there was something in Lord Caldwell's conversation which grated on her mind. There ran a tone of irony through all he said, which always left her in doubt whether he was in jest or in earnest; he seemed to have the peculiar gift of disenchanting every subject he touched upon—of bringing down every thing imaginative, or noble, or holy, to the level of cold matter-of-fact, and destroying its spell by a covert sneer.

She compared his conversation in her mind with that of Edward. Whilst Lord Caldwell seemed to delight in sifting the purest gold, to find the one grain of alloy, Edward, out of the basest materials, extracted ever some precious ore. Whilst the cold and dreary materialism of the one would have sneered poetry from the earth, and desecrated every high place before which the spirit worshipped, the other clothed that which was itself barren, with the beauty of his own rich imaginings.

Lord Caldwell seemed to have the talent of dragging from its lurking-place the secret foible which disfigures even the brightest characters, and exposing it to view; whilst Edward ever sought in the most perverted for traces of the divine image, which, dimmed and defaced though it be, is never wholly eradicated from the heart of man. To his thoughtful reverence nothing was common or unclean, and matter itself seemed to start into life beneath the influence of his pure and lofty spirituality. The comparison was not favourable to the man of the world, and he would probably have been not a little mortified, could he have discerned that the result of all his exertions to please his beautiful neighbour had been to confirm her still

more in her belief of the immeasurable superiority of Edward Annesley to all other men, himself included.

If Madame de Stael took her opinion of the conversational powers of English women from the exhibition of them at a dinner party, during the interval between the ladies leaving the dining-table and the gentlemen's appearance in the drawing-room, it would not be surprising that her estimate of them was so low. Whether it is that the sudden breaking up of all conversation, by the separation of one part of the society from the other, or whether the exertion of amusing and being, or seeming, amused, during dinner-time, makes silence a welcome relaxation, or whether—but this seems to us the most untenable opinion of all—women, when left together, naturally turn to frivolous and insipid subjects, in which men can take no interest, certain it is, that even when the *maîtresse de maison* has both tact and ability, and the members of the party are above the usual average of intellect, that fated hour never fails to be “weary, flat, and unprofitable.”

It was not to be expected that the one which followed the dinner at Oaklands this evening should form an exception. The ladies congregated as usual round the fire, on their first entrance into the drawing-room; general remarks on the coldness of the weather and the length of the winter were made and listened to with as much interest as if they had never been heard before, and then Lady Littledale and Louisa sat down on one sofa, Lady Dashwood and Mrs. Fanshaw took possession of the other, and Ellen and the two young ladies

established themselves on the ottoman in front of the fire, thus completing the formidable circle.

“What a pretty room this is!” said Lady Littledale, making the same remark she made every time she dined at Oaklands, which had been regularly twice a year, for the last eleven years of her life. “Just the right size for comfort, and I like that oak wainscoting so much, it looks so nice and warm.”

“Yes; and I like it too for its antiquity,” answered Louisa, “though it is perhaps rather too dark for a drawing-room.”

“Perhaps it is: that was what prevented Lord Littledale from having the gallery at Littledale done so. It does not light well. By the bye, have you seen the new rooms at the abbey? I am told they are magnificent.”

“So I have heard, but I have not seen them. Lord Caldwell is just the sort of man to like his house to be more splendid than any one else’s.”

“Yes, so I should think; *nouveaux riches* like him always do. But he is very unlike most other *parvenus*. What a nice person he is! Do not you think so?”

“Yes. He is very agreeable, and very clever, too, I believe.”

“Oh, very. Lord Littledale says, that if the Whigs come in again, he will certainly be prime minister. That will be a very nice thing for the son of a manufacturer.”

Whilst Lady Littledale, who was by no means a silly or ignorant woman, was settling that oak-wainscoting, Lord Caldwell and the situation of prime minister were all equally *nice*; Lady Dashwood and Mrs. Fanshaw were deep in the discus-

sion of nurses and children, governesses and school-rooms.

"Servants are such plagues," said Lady Dashwood, "one never can trust them. I am obliged to spend half my life in the nursery, to see that the children are properly attended to; and I am frightened out of my wits every time I go out, lest something should happen while I am away."

"Oh, it is dreadful!" said Mrs. Fanshaw, in a sympathizing tone. "Now, if you will believe it, the other day I happened to go in the back way (I like sometimes to see what's going on, you know), and I found my nurse and the baby in the kitchen. She had come down, she said, to see her brother, as if *I* cared for her brother! and the next day she actually gave warning, because she could not stay in a house where she was not allowed to see her relations. Only think! and that, too, after my letting her go and spend a whole evening with them three months ago."

"Oh, they are all the same. I am sure I do not know what servants will come to soon. It is all the march of intellect that does it; and the fuss that is made by a certain set about the education of the people, and poor people having minds, and what not; the consequence is, that servants think now they must have books and society like their betters. So ridiculous!"

"Quite absurd, and governesses are really almost as bad. The other day, my girl's governess told me that she did not consider it part of her duty to play in the drawing-room when we have company, and that she felt it necessary to have her evenings to herself after the fatigues of the day. Such stuff her talking of fatigue, when she has

only the three girls to attend to, in fact, as the four little boys only sit in the school-room to keep them out of mischief, and I merely require her to walk with them twice a day."

Lady Dashwood shrugged her shoulders and lifted up her eyes in astonishment at the absurdity of a governess requesting to have two or three hours out of the long day to herself to rest her nerves, irritated by the perpetual noise of seven children, and relax her mind worn and jaded with the labour of the most irksome teaching; the impertinence of her preferring the quiet of solitude to playing the part of a hired performer in the drawing-room, insulted by the want of consideration of her patroness, and wounded by the humiliating neglect of her guests. It was indeed wonderful!

Meanwhile Miss Littledale and Miss Fanshaw fell to Ellen's share to entertain. As she was not much in the habit of giving up her own gratification to that of others whom she did not care for, it is very likely that, engrossed by her own thoughts, she would have left the two young ladies to entertain each other, if they had not addressed themselves to her.

"Do you ride, Miss Percival?" began Miss Littledale.

"Yes, I am very fond of it."

"Are you going to the ball?" asked Miss Fanshaw.

"What ball?"

"Oh! the county ball at H.... Had you not heard of it?"

"No. When is it to be?"

"On the twenty-first. They say it is to be a very gay ball indeed. I suppose you will go?"

"I should like it very much, but I do not suppose I shall, as mamma never goes to the H. . . . balls."

"Do you like dancing?" resumed Miss Littledale.

"Yes, very much, indeed; but I know so few people, that if I went to this ball, I am afraid I should find nobody to dance with."

"Oh! there will be plenty of men," exclaimed Miss Fanshaw. "H. . . ., you know, is a garrison town, and there are such nice young men amongst the military."

"Are there?" said Ellen, in a tone of indifference quite incomprehensible to Miss Fanshaw.

"To be sure there are," answered Miss Fanshaw; "and it makes such a difference in a ball whether there are military or not. Don't you think so, Miss Littledale?"

"The uniforms make the room look gay, certainly."

"And then, one is sure of plenty of partners."

"Oh! as to that, *we* always take our own party with us, and I seldom dance with any one out of it."

Miss Fanshaw was silenced. The superior finery of the Honourable Miss Littledale abashed her; she felt sunk far beneath her, and did not attempt to address her again.

The other ladies' conversation had also dropped, and there was almost total silence in the room, when the sound of the gentlemen's voices as they came up stairs caused a cheering stir in the formal circle. Lady Dashwood and Mrs. Fanshaw sat up and resettled their gowns; Miss Littledale laid

down the album she had been looking over, and moved a little away from the ottoman, where the three young ladies had been sitting close together. Miss Fanshaw smoothed her ringlets, and Ellen's brightening eye turned eagerly towards the door to watch for Edward's appearance. The door was opened, the gentlemen poured in, and in a moment all was life and gaiety in that room erewhile so dull and quiet.

Mr. St. John at once took his old place beside Louisa, and she was glad at that moment that Reginald was not there to read in her heart the joy she could not suppress.

"There have been great changes here since I went away," said he. "The Montagues gone one way, and Mr. Talbot another, and Miss Percival going to be married to Mr. Annesley. That is really wonderful!"

"Why? It seems to me nothing could be more natural than their attachment, thrown as they have been into each other's society."

"Oh! that was natural enough. Miss Percival is a goddess, and Mr. Annesley, like other mortals, could but worship her; and that she should have persuaded herself that he is a god, is natural enough too, since, like Miranda, she has seen but him. But that Lady Ethelwode, who is not under the influence of such hallucinations, should consent to her daughter — and such a daughter — being buried alive at her age in a country parsonage, is truly wonderful."

"I never can understand that expression of being buried alive," said Louisa. "It seems to me that wherever there is full scope for the exercise of all our energies and affections; wherever we can have

the companionship of our fellow-creatures, and communion with the great and good of all ages through books, and can look with a free spirit on God's glorious universe above and around us, there is life—life of heart and mind; and what can the world give beyond that?"

"Nothing—nothing, indeed, though it may take much away," said St. John, earnestly, looking with admiration as he spoke at her glowing countenance. "The world can give nothing to those who look upon it as you do, free from the influence of vanity, or fashion, or false associations. But few are able to view it so; and in this, as in most other things, you will find yourself pretty nearly singular in your opinion."

"Is that meant as a compliment or not?" said Louisa, smiling. "I did not think that I was open to such an imputation of oddity."

"Oddity! What a word! a combination of *bizarre* and *baroque*. No, you are certainly not an oddity, but I am afraid you must submit to being thought singular—at all events, till the world is a very different place from what it is now."

"The more I hear of that same unknown world, the more I fear, indeed, that I shall never be any thing but out of place in it, that I shall find myself utterly unsuited to it, and it to me. If it were not that I am convinced that it is really composed of men and women, who must have some feelings of our human nature in common with me, I should dread the thoughts of entering it."

"Perhaps, when you do enter it, even that conviction will be shaken, and you will doubt whether fine ladies and gentlemen really are men and women. At least, they have forced their human

nature into such a strange, distorted mould, that it is very difficult to recognise, and I rather question whether they would own to it themselves."

"But I hope it is possible to live in the world without submitting to such a transformation; that it is possible to preserve one's own nature in its true human shape and individuality?"

"It is *possible*, perhaps, but it is fearfully difficult, as even you will find. The world will either grind you down into that artificial and uniform mould, or it will brand you with the stigma of singularity, and attack you with its 'dread laugh.' Strong, indeed, must you be to withstand such arms as these."

Louisa was silent; she was thinking that St. John himself seemed to have withstood those arms, powerful as they were; and if so, could he be such a one as Reginald had described? Her heart answered that it was impossible.

Any further conversation between them was put an end to for the present, by Ellen beginning to sing. Lord Caldwell was half sorry when she rose to take her place at the pianoforte. He felt that her singing, to be in harmony with her beauty, must be perfect; and this could not be expected from one brought up in such a retired place, and who had never been to the opera in her life. He was a passionate admirer of music and an excellent judge of it; and he dreaded lest Ellen's bad singing should destroy his enjoyment in her beauty. But the first notes of Ellen's song set his fears at rest on that point, and he thought her more beautiful than before, as he listened to the rich liquid tones, modulated to such perfect expression of the simple and moving words of the ballad she had chosen;

her countenance, the while, speaking as eloquently as her voice. Even he was forced to acknowledge the power by which she moved the heart at her will, and he yielded himself gladly to the strange and delicious emotion, which, for a while, made him forget the "schemes of hope and pride" that were ever busily fermenting in his brain; and gave him back something of the freshness, the keen sensations of youth.

When Ellen ceased singing he expressed his admiration in rapturous terms, but he was piqued to observe that, whilst she listened to him with apparent indifference, her eyes wandered round the room as if in search of some one whose praise was more valued. That one, however, was at the further end of the room, half concealed in the recess of a window, his eyes fixed on her radiant face, his senses drinking in the sound of that voice which thrilled in every fibre of his being. He could not join the crowd around her, or tell her in that place what he felt, and he preferred remaining at a distance, where he could gaze upon her unobserved. She was vexed at his absence, and, as she turned from her fruitless search, she listened with a more willing ear to Lord Caldwell's enthusiastic compliments.

"Others value my singing, if he does not," thought she, and she yielded instantly to Lord Caldwell's urgent entreaty for another song.

"What shall I sing?"

"Anything, provided you will but sing again."

This time she chose Italian, and her pure accent and finished execution astonished and delighted Lord Caldwell as much as her previous power of expression had done. During the whole evening

he sat beside her, begging for song after song; and Ellen, flattered by the admiration of one who was reputed no mean connoisseur, and partly piqued by Edward's absence from the circle around, partly excited by the consciousness of her own powers, exerted herself so successfully that those who heard her for the first time thought they had never heard any singing before, and those who were her habitual audience, confessed that she surpassed herself as much as she generally surpassed all others. Lord Caldwell hung over her enraptured, and his undisguised admiration and assiduous attentions were not unmarked by the spectators.

"What do you think of that for a flirtation?" said Mrs. Fanshaw to Lady Dashwood; "I never saw anything like it; quite shocking in so young a girl, and engaged too, as she is. No wonder poor Mr. Annesley sits moping in that corner; he must rather repent having chosen so flighty a young lady."

"And she has no money after all, I believe?"

"Oh, no! Lady Ethelwode's fortune all goes to her son. I rather think Mr. Annesley was taken in there, too."

"A very losing speculation for a poor man, to marry such a handsome wife without money," said Lady Dashwood.

"Do you think she is so *very* handsome? Well, she is not to my taste,—too much of a gentleman's beauty for me. I cannot bear to see a girl so run after by the men." And Mrs. Fanshaw glanced, as she spoke, with some indignation from the group that was congregated round Ellen, to the corner in which her own daughter sat deserted and solitary.

There was another still more earnest observer of Ellen and Lord Caldwell that evening. Edward sat apart, as Mrs. Fanshaw had remarked, watching every change of Ellen's speaking countenance. He read there but too well the love of admiration, the pleased consciousness of triumph, as she listened, with sparkling eyes and heightened colour, to Lord Caldwell's whispered compliments, and the louder applause of the circle around her. It was not in his nature to feel jealousy. Doubt could find no place in such love as his—it would have seemed to him a degradation; but his thoughts dwelt anxiously on the future.

Could she, so brilliant, so admired, and so happy in that admiration, could she be contented with the humble sphere of a country clergyman's wife? Could she, who listened with delight to the praises of a stranger, and exerted all the witchery of her beauty and her voice to win them, be satisfied with the love and admiration of her husband only, and be content to have no other world but his quiet home? Would she not regret, when the first glow of passion had subsided, that she had sacrificed all the triumphs the world offered her, to a love which was not sufficient to replace them? As these thoughts passed through his mind, they brought over his countenance the cloud of melancholy which Mrs. Fanshaw had remarked, and they, at last, became so painful, that he was glad when the advancing hour warned even Lord Caldwell that it was time to depart.

He lingered till the last, that his parting with Ellen might not be watched by Mrs. Fanshaw's prying eyes.

"Where have you been all the evening?" said she, half-reproachfully, as he came up to her.

"Sitting in that recess, listening to you, and thinking."

"What could you be thinking of which kept you away from me all that time?" asked Ellen, though a sudden consciousness sent the warm blood to her cheek as she spoke.

"I will tell you to-morrow, if you will walk with me. Shall I call for you in the afternoon?"

"Oh yes, do come; and, dear Edward, do not look so gloomy."

"I am not gloomy, love, only thoughtful. Never mind my looks; and now, good night."

"Do not say good night so coldly; say one, one kind word to me before you go."

"Good night, my own beloved," said Edward, taking the small white hand which lay on his shoulder, and kissing it fervently.

"Now I shall sleep in peace," said Ellen, smiling, and Edward left the room.

"Well, Caldwell," said St. John, as they drove home together from Oaklands, "do you think Miss Percival, on nearer inspection, as handsome as you did in that passing glimpse of her?"

"Handsome! by Jove, she's heavenly! too beautiful to tread this common earth."

St. John laughed.

"I never thought you were given to rhapsodize before," said he, "especially about women."

"Because I never before saw a woman of whom rhapsody was but simple truth. In sober sadness, Miss Percival's beauty is marvellous; she would stand peerless among the houris of Mahomet's

paradise! and then, such a voice joined to such a face!"

"Dame Nature has certainly not been niggardly of her gifts," said St. John; "what a sensation she would create in London!"

"Yes; she would throw every other woman into absolute obscurity: all the world would be at her feet."

"Unfortunately, the world will not have the opportunity; she is engaged to be married forthwith."

"Engaged! to whom, in Heaven's name?" exclaimed Lord Caldwell, with a vehemence so unlike his usual manner, that St. John could not help smiling.

"To Mr. Annesley, the curate of the parish; lucky dog as he is."

"The curate of the parish! good heavens, what a fate for such a creature as that! I suppose this curate was the 'melancholy and gentleman-like' young man, who sat opposite to her at dinner; I thought there was something between them, for I saw her blush when he spoke to her: but do you mean to say, that Lady Ethelwode is actually fool enough, or barbarous enough, to allow her daughter to sacrifice herself in such a melancholy manner?"

"I fancy Lady Ethelwode cares very little whether her daughter is sacrificed or not, provided she has no trouble about it. Miss Percival might marry the Grand Turk, if she pleased, so long as her mother was not obliged to get up from her sofa to give her away. She was heard to rejoice the other day, that this marriage would save her

the fatigue of bringing her daughter out in London."

"What manner of stone can the woman be made of?" said Lord Caldwell; "it is a positive sin to allow such a marriage,—a perfect robbery of the world; such 'a gem of purest ray serene,' was never made to be buried in the dark, unfathomed recesses of a country parsonage; and rather than allow of such a sacrifice, I will marry her myself."

St. John burst out laughing.

"A most quixotic undertaking, certainly," said he, "but rather a difficult one to accomplish, considering that the young lady is already in love and engaged."

"Bah! my viscount's coronet, and sixty thousand a year, will soon make her melancholy Jacques, and his more melancholy parsonage, kick the beam. I flatter myself he will not have a chance if I enter the lists."

"Your sudden passion has made you very sanguine, at all events; but woman's love is a devilish tough thing;—it clings like a grappling iron, when once it is fixed."

"Ay, but if you can get a powerful lever upon it, you may easily wrest it from its hold."

St. John inquired what lever his lordship intended to apply in this case.

"Vanity, my dear St. John, vanity, the most powerful of all for moving a woman; with that I will engage to work any woman to my will, though her love be as strong as death; and if I have read aright that speaking countenance, Miss Percival is not likely to prove an exception."

"But you cannot be serious in talking of marrying Miss Percival. Your very name is an abo-

mination to her stepfather, and he would consider his castle polluted by your presence."

"Nevertheless, I will marry his stepdaughter, and with his full and free consent. You are astonished at my speaking with so much assurance: listen to me;—I was born the youngest son of a catholic mechanic; I have risen above the station to which I was born; I have won wealth, rank, reputation, honour; I have overcome the prejudice attached in this aristocratic country to my birth; I have overcome the greater disabilities imposed by my father's creed; one step more, and I shall hold the first place in the realm after the sovereign, and, in power, be greater than he. Do you think that one, who by the mere strength of his will, has done all this, will be baffled in his pursuit of a woman?"

St. John could not but acknowledge the force of the argument; and he almost shuddered at the fearful power of that will, which pursued its ends, regardless of the means, with the remorselessness and the tenacity of a blood-hound.

"Your passion is, at all events, a very sudden one," said he, after a pause; "I never believed before in the existence of love at first sight."

"Love! no," said his companion, laughing; "I am too old, and too hard, to 'fall in love,' as the phrase goes. I admire Miss Percival as I admire the Venus de Medici, and shall marry her on the same principle as I should buy the Venus if she were in the market; besides, I have taken some pains to have the best house, the best cook, and the best stud in England; my establishment, to be complete, only wants the most beautiful mistress

to preside over it ; and Miss Percival *est mon fait ! voilà tout !*"

St. John, worldly-minded as he was, revolted from the cold-blooded, ostentatious selfishness of these words. He threw himself back in the carriage in silent disgust, and nothing more was said till they reached the abbey.

CHAPTER II.

"'Twas not well.
I hoped thee raised above all artifice
That makes thy sex but infamy matured."

Evadne.

"Love should have implicit confidence as its bond and nature—and jealousy is doubt, and doubt is the death of love." — *Ernest Maltravers.*

The next day Edward came to claim Ellen's promise of walking with him. For the first time in her life she shrank from meeting him, for she was conscious that her manner the night before had been such as he might justly complain of, and she dreaded a word of reproof from his lips. His greeting, however, was kind as usual, but there was a seriousness in his countenance and manner which made her heart sink within her. They took their way in silence, through the now leafless woods, to the sea-shore, she anxiously pondering on his unusual gravity, he as anxiously turning over in his mind the best way of leading to the subject he wished to speak to her upon. It was Ellen who spoke first.

"Will you not tell me now," she said, raising her dark blue eyes timidly to his, "what made you so gloomy last night; why, indeed, you are so still?"

"Can you not guess a reason?" answered Ed-

ward, turning away from her look, whose witchery he felt it necessary to steel himself against, to accomplish his purpose.

"No—unless," said Ellen, blushing and hesitating, "you were displeased because—because—Lord Caldwell paid me some attention. Surely, Edward, you are not jealous?"

"Jealous! no; I could not love you as I do, Ellen, if I had not perfect confidence. If a single doubt could tarnish the purity of that love, I would cast it from me, though I were to tear my heart-strings out with it."

"Yet jealousy is not incompatible with love, for I am jealous, very jealous of you. It was jealousy, or at least pique, which made me last night—" she hesitated, and then went on—"which made me allow Lord Caldwell's attentions, and seem pleased with his admiration."

"Ellen, such acts are unworthy of you. Is it possible that you should doubt me? or that, doubting, you should seek to win me back by the wiles of such common-place coquetry?"

"Oh, Edward! I feel I have been very wrong—very foolish. But why did you stay from me all the evening? why did you talk to every one, even to Miss Fanshaw, and not to me?"

"Because I cannot speak to you in the tone of indifference suited to such a scene. I cannot come near to you, Ellen, without feeling my whole frame tremble with emotion; I cannot calmly hear your voice or meet your eyes; and I do not choose that others should read my feelings, and mark and comment on the signs of that love which I hold sacred."

"Edward," said Ellen, the tears starting into her eyes, "will you—can you forgive me? I am

unworthy of such love as your's—unworthy of you ; I know—I feel that I am ; I have always felt it.”

“ Ellen, my beloved, do not speak thus. You are worthy, most worthy of love even fonder, deeper than mine, if such could be. But I sometimes fear lest that love should not be sufficient for your happiness ; lest you should find, when you can reason more calmly than now, that it cannot repay you for the sacrifices you have made to it. It was that thought, Ellen, which caused the gloom you remarked yesterday. I dread lest you should have deceived yourself ; and I came to meet you to-day, determined to place once more your destiny in your own hands. Our engagement is not yet irrevocable. Pause, and reflect well, before you make it so, whether you can indeed find your happiness in the humble sphere, the quiet, uneventful lot which I offer you ; whether the love, abundant though it be, of *one*, can repay you for the loss of the admiration, the triumphs, the world would lay at your feet. I would rather—yea, rather a thousand times give up every hope, renounce at once our engagement, than think a time may come when you will regret having formed it.”

“ Edward, Edward, surely it is you who are now doubting ? surely I have not deserved, by one evening's folly, that you should think me so vain, so light a thing, as to value admiration, though it were the admiration of the whole world, more than your love. If you can think that, I will promise never to see Lord Caldwell again, never enter again into any kind of society until we are married.”

“ My dear Ellen, surely you cannot suppose that I would receive such a promise as that ? Such a

piece of jealous tyranny might well make you shrink from any nearer connection with me."

"But what can I do to prove to you that I do not care for the world—that the sacrifices you talk so much of are none to me?—Oh, how I wish this long engagement were ended! If we were once married, all your doubts and fears would be over. Why need we wait for this living? What signifies a little more or less money, where there is such love as ours to make the poorest home seem beautiful?"

"Bless you for those words, my own Ellen!" said Edward, pressing the hand which rested on his arm. "I would not lose an hour in making you mine, irrevocably mine; but your mother is steady in refusing her consent till I get a living, and we cannot act in opposition to her. I am too grateful for the treasure she has yielded to me, to quarrel with her because she has attached to it a condition, which I hope soon to see fulfilled."

Ellen sighed deeply. "I cannot help thinking sometimes that it will never be fulfilled, that something will come between us, that our dreams of happiness are too bright to be realized."

"Ellen, dearest, why give way to such idle fears? What *can* come between us, whilst our hearts are true to each other? Why look so anxiously to the future? Let us leave it in childlike faith in the hands of our Father. It must be good for us, if we make it not evil ourselves, by our own weakness and distrustfulness. Look up to me, my beloved, with your own bright smile—tell me that you will cast away doubt and fear."

And Ellen, in whose versatile nature despondency and joy succeeded each other as quickly as

rain and sunshine on an April day, did look up through the tears which trembled on her long dark eyelashes, with a smile so radiant, so full of love and hope, that Edward forgot every thing else while gazing upon her.

They wandered on through the woods ; and long before they were driven home by the damp and darkness of a winter's evening, both had forgotten every painful feeling, every anxious misgiving, in the delicious anticipations of happiness, which their conversation had awakened.

When Ellen entered the drawing-room on her return, St. John was there. He had passed the gate in his ride, and had thought it was but an act of common civility to call after dining there, and, having found Louisa, who was confined with a cold, busily employed in painting, he had become so interested in the progress of the group she was finishing, that he had found it impossible to tear himself away. Ellen's entrance interrupted the conversation, and he soon after took his leave, expressing much anxiety about Miss Conway's cold, which, accordingly, he found it necessary to come and inquire after the next day.

When this pretext was set aside by Louisa's perfect recovery, Ellen could not help smiling, as by the merest accident St. John never failed to meet them in all their rides and walks. He seemed to have an intuitive knowledge of their movements ; and Ellen was tempted to believe that, unless he had some kind fairy in his service to reveal to him the intentions of the inmates of Oaklands, he must live in the tower of the old ruin, whence, with the assistance of a glass, he might command a view of the house and the grounds. She kept her surmises

to herself, however, for, though Louisa's manner left it doubtful how far these attentions were pleasing to her, she could see enough to understand that her mind was not in a state to welcome any comments upon the subject.

There seemed to be a struggle going on within that usually calm mind, and Ellen looked anxiously on. She remembered how gently, how skillfully Louisa had soothed her wounded feelings in the hour of sorrow, and she would fain have paid sympathy for sympathy, and tried the power of affection to calm the troubled spirit. But this could not be; and it was only by a fonder embrace when they parted, that she could express that some new and anxious feeling was mingled with her affection.

Her absence was feelingly lamented by St. John. She had unconsciously been a most useful auxiliary when he and Lord Caldwell dined at Oaklands. She could occupy the attentions of the latter, and draw all the gentlemen round her harp, whilst he had time to pursue his own amusement undisturbed. In their rides, she would engross the conversation of Sir Charles, who was very fond of his beautiful companion, and in their walks, if, as often happened, Edward accompanied them, the party so naturally separated, that he unavoidably found himself almost alone with Louisa, and had thus opportunities of conversation he could hardly hope for, now that she was left once more *tête-à-tête* with her father.

The reader will, perhaps, inquire here whether that usually anxious father was blind to what was going on around him, or was an indifferent spectator to his child's struggle? No; but, after

much thought, he had determined to remain silent. He, also, had anxiously studied the character of St. John, from the moment of his increased attentions to Louisa; but, in their retired life, and with the motives St. John had to preserve a favourable mask, it was no difficult thing for him to elude even Sir Charles's penetration. Away from his usual associates, and from every temptation to evil, with every thing on the other hand to draw out the best points of his character, nothing could happen to unfold it in its true light, to those who had such interest in knowing it.

Sir Charles found in him a ready sympathy with every high and noble feeling, superior talent, and a cultivated mind, peculiarly calculated to appreciate Louisa, and to enjoy her society; and, being satisfied on these points, it was with heartfelt pleasure he saw the approaching probability of her marriage to his heir. He thought it would be the crowning joy of his life, to feel at the close of it that his child would remain the happy mistress of her early home.

CHAPTER III.

" I'll have her,———

And I no friends to back my suit withal
But the plain devil, and dissembling looks :
And yet to win her—all the world to nothing!"

Richard III.

Lord Caldwell was, as he had told St. John, in sober earnest, when he spoke of marrying Ellen; and the very difficulties which attended such an enterprise, and which would have deterred any other man from the thought of attempting it, were to him only additional incentives. It was something to do, to think of, during this dead season of the year, infinitely more pleasurable, and more exciting, than shooting, or hunting hares and foxes, in company with country squires; and, even if he failed, he should, at all events, have had the pleasure of the excitement. Accordingly, he addressed himself seriously to consider the means of effecting his purpose.

It was evident that his first step must be to gain an entrance into Ethelwode castle. If he could once obtain a footing there, which would give him free access to Ellen, he did not doubt but that the rest would be easily accomplished. To gain such an entrance, however, was no easy matter; and when Lord Ethelwode's character was considered, and his inveterate and long-cherished hatred to

wards the upstart, who had been through life a thorn in his path—the Mordecai at his gate—darkening every hour of his highest pride and joy—it might almost be regarded as hopeless. But Lord Caldwell was not a man to give up a project which he had once formed, by any considerations of its difficulty, and he arranged his plan of operations without wasting time on any doubts or fears as to his final success.

He resolved to begin by attacking his haughty neighbour through his vulnerable point—family pride. He knew that the dearest wish of Lord Ethelwode's heart was to regain his ancient patrimony, for his son, and he determined to make this wish the means of obtaining the footing at the castle so necessary to his plans. Accordingly, he caused reports to be spread that he was about to sell the abbey. Lord Ethelwode listened eagerly to the rumour, and immediately sent his agent to inquire into its truth; but Lord Caldwell's object was to make this transaction the means of bringing him into personal communication with Lord Ethelwode, and the agent could obtain no satisfactory information, although the rumour was not contradicted.

Meanwhile, he strove to conciliate his neighbour by various acts of courtesy, which Lord Ethelwode could not but acknowledge. An obnoxious pavilion, which obstructed the view of the ruins from the castle, and which had been the object of Lord Ethelwode's disgust for years past, was pulled down. Several ancient banners, won by some Baron of Ethelwode during the wars of Henry V., and which had, by the neglect or indifference of the late Lord, been sold with the old tower, and which the pre-

sent baron had lamented over in vain, were sent to Lord Ethelwode, with a courteous note, stating, that, in looking over old papers, Lord Caldwell had found a note, dated many years back, in which Lord Ethelwode requested that the banners might be restored, and that he now gladly complied with the request, which had, from some unaccountable, and, by him, deeply regretted, mischance, been overlooked until now.

Nothing could have been more conducive to Lord Caldwell's object. Lord Ethelwode was overjoyed at regaining the long-lost banners, and, in his exultation, thought little of this sudden recollection of a request that had been strenuously urged on the one side, and resolutely denied on the other. He even expressed an opinion, that he might have judged Lord Caldwell rather too harshly, and that, although of low origin, he had certainly shown, in this instance, courtesy worthy of more gentle blood. Another slight act of attention, on the part of Lord Caldwell, operated a still further change in his favour; and the next time Lord Ethelwode met his former opponent out riding, he actually condescended to return, though haughtily enough, the latter's profound inclination. Ellen, who was riding with her stepfather, was astonished beyond measure at this unwonted condescension, and was glad to see this step towards a reconciliation, which might, at length, open the doors of Ethelwode castle to one of the most agreeable of its neighbours.

"Do you know Lord Caldwell?" asked Lord Ethelwode, as he remarked the smile of recognition with which she answered his bow.

"Yes—at least I have met him several times."

“Where?”

“At Oaklands, when I was staying there last.”

“Ah—that is just like Sir Charles, with his liberal principles, as he calls them, to ask any man to his house who has attained notoriety, let his birth be what it may. Strange, that a man of really good family should be so indifferent to the advantages of birth. Some of these days, his daughter will fall in love with one of his upstart friends, and then he will repent of his rashness.”

Ellen smiled at her stepfather's prognostications as to the direction of Louisa's affections; but she thought it unnecessary to take up Sir Charles Conway's defence.

“And what sort of a person is this new-fangled lord?” asked Lord Ethelwode, after a few minutes' silence.

“I thought him very agreeable and gentleman-like.”

“Gentlemanlike! Every body is gentlemanlike, in these days. The man who was a tailor, or a grocer, yesterday, if he makes a fortune in trade, and sets up his carriage to-day, is pronounced to be gentlemanlike. Those sort of people may be tolerated as distant acquaintances; but, on nearer intercourse, their original meanness always discovers itself. You find your gentlemanlike man committing some solecism in good breeding; the smell of the shop is too strong for all his perfumes of assumed gentility to keep down.”

Ellen laughed at the idea of this description of a vulgar *parvenu* applying to Lord Caldwell, whose easy and polished manners were the very reverse of those described by her stepfather; but she did not contradict him; she thought it better to let

him find out for himself the mistake, which any attempt of her's to correct would only have served to root in more firmly.

There was little chance of his making this discovery. Notwithstanding the softening influence of Lord Caldwell's well-judged manœuvres, Lord Ethelwode's aversion to any thing like personal intercourse with him remained in full force. Lord Caldwell was a viscount, while he was only a baron; and he turned with indignant disgust from the idea of yielding precedence to a man whose grandfather was a common mechanic, and who had himself risen from the ranks of the people. There was degradation to the name of Ethelwode in the very thought; and he rejected, with cold disdain, all overtures which could lead to a more intimate acquaintance. His narrow mind and bigoted adherence to his own opinions peculiarly fitted Lord Ethelwode to be what Johnson emphatically called "a good-hater."

He hated Lord Caldwell for the superior intellect which had enabled him to break through the barriers which his birth had placed between them; and him still more for the fortune which had enabled him to profit by the degradation of the house of Ethelwode, by purchasing its ancient patrimony. Lord Caldwell's pertinacious refusal to sell that patrimony back again to the hereditary owner, and the perpetual irritation arising from the sight of those ancestral domains in the possession of another, had caused this hatred to sink deeper and deeper into Lord Ethelwode's heart; the feeling was still more envenomed by political animosity, and it was not the light courtesies of a few days *that* could eradicate a passion which had thus

grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength. Lord Caldwell soon found that the expedients he had hitherto tried would be unavailing, unless aided by some more powerful auxiliary.

Meanwhile, time was passing away. Every day his rival was at the castle, sharing Ellen's walks and rides, received as one of the family, whilst he rarely met her, and then seldom found an opportunity of speaking to her. He was aware, too, that, since the memorable evening at Oaklands, her manner towards him had changed—his open admiration was received with a reserve which he attributed to Edward's influence—and, whilst his liveliest conversation only elicited her passing smile, the very sound of Edward's voice called the rich glow to her cheek and the light to her eye.

"I have no chance," thought he, "till I can establish a footing in the house, and can be at hand, at all times, to counteract my rival's influence. She is all the better worth winning, however, for being proof against my rank and wealth. If I carry off the prize at last, I shall owe it wholly to my own intrinsic merits—no mean triumph, at fifty years of age, over youth, beauty, and romance in the person of my rival.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Must we part,
And is it come to this?—Oh, I have still
Deemed it enough of joy with thee to share
E'en grief itself—and now—but this is vain ;
Alas! too deep, too fond is woman's love,
Too full of hope, she casts on troubled waves
The treasures of her soul.”

MRS. HEMANS.

Circumstances, at this time, unexpectedly favoured Lord Caldwell's designs. Since Reginald's abrupt departure from Oaklands, his letters had been few and short, addressed exclusively to Sir Charles, and treating only of matters of business or general interest. Sir Charles, who had remarked with pain his frequent gloom and his variable spirits, was not surprised, though he felt grieved, by this change in his usual full and agreeable correspondence. It confirmed his previous suspicion, that his young friend had some secret cause of uneasiness; but, as the latter was studiously reserved on the subject, he felt that he had no right to force himself into his confidence, and refrained from any comments or questions which might lead to it. To Annesley, with whom he had formerly kept up a close correspondence, Reginald had not written at all, although the former had several times written to him; and Edward was beginning to feel uncomfortable at this strange silence, when the following letter arrived.

“ My dear Annesley,

“ I believe I ought to begin by making apologies for leaving your kind letters so long unanswered; but I am a bad hand at apologizing, and you must be content with the only excuse I have to make, *i. e.* that my mind has not been sufficiently at rest since my arrival here to enable me to write on indifferent subjects, and I had nothing satisfactory to say of myself, so I thought it better not to write at all. I am not sure that I should have answered you even now, but that I have a great favour to ask of you, which must be asked without delay, lest it should be unavailing.

“ You know that I left Oaklands to come here to our old college friend, Henry Elridge, who was ill, and had repeatedly begged me to come to him. I had not seen him since he took orders and married; and I found him a perfect wreck, both in body and mind. You may remember that when he abandoned his original intention of studying the law, and entered the church for the sake of a provision which should enable him to marry, we both foreboded evil from such a course, and tried to dissuade him from it. Our forebodings have been more than realized. He has found the love for which he gave up the brilliant prospects the law opened to him insufficient to repay him for the sacrifice. He is wholly unfitted to his vocation as a parish-priest; and the quiet, secluded life he is forced to lead in this place is to him a stagnation of all his faculties.

“ There is not a trace left of the energy, the aspiring spirit, the playful and brilliant wit for which he was distinguished in our college circles; and his mind, deprived of its appropriate channel

of exertion, chafes and frets in restless discontent against the chains which he himself wound round it. Ill health has followed as a natural consequence on mental disease, and he is now so ill that his medical man says there is little hope of his recovery, unless he can have immediate change of air and scene. This, however, is the most difficult of all remedies to procure for him, for he is too poor to pay a curate, and none of the neighbouring clergymen are able to undertake his duty, in addition to their own, for such a length of time.

“In this painful dilemma, I bethought myself of you, and this is the favour I have to ask. Will you, can you come here and take this poor fellow’s place for a few weeks? I am well aware that I ask no small sacrifice, when I beg you to leave Ethelwode at this time; and, perhaps, to any other man I should not venture to make such a request. But I know that *you* never yet let your own pleasure or gratification stand in the way of your performing a kind or generous action, and this conviction makes me feel sure that you will not allow an old friend to wear away his life by inches, when you have it in your power to save him.

“Miss Percival is herself too generous not to urge you to go on such an errand of mercy, for, as a woman, she will feel even more deeply than I do, for the devoted wife and the helpless children, whom this poor man’s death would leave in utter desolation and beggary. Neither of them know any thing of this application to you. Elridge’s pride would not have allowed me to make it, but I have no doubt he will gladly accept your services, if he believes they are voluntarily offered. Should you decide on coming, pray come speedily, as

every moment is of consequence. I shall wait for you here, as I shall be very glad to see you again, and it may be the last time we shall meet for years. I will not enter now, however, into any discussion of my future plans. When I see you, I hope they will be more settled, and my mind in a better state for conversation; now it is still a chaos of tumultuous and bitter thoughts; every thing seems dark and dreary; life has lost its prestige, and appears only as a weary succession of cheerless toil and monotonous inactivity.

"I need not tell *you* the reason of this change. You have known enough of my feelings for years past, to discern why I have gone forth from the place which was once my home, to be a solitary wanderer on the earth: oh, Annesley, how different is your fate!

"But enough of this unmanly complaining: believe me, it is not often that I yield to it. No! the disappointment of an early dream, however bright, however fondly cherished, shall not have power to blight my existence, to damp my ambition, to destroy the high hope with which I started on the race of life. If I must walk alone, I will not walk the less proudly, the less steadfastly to the goal I set up to myself. If I have loved in vain, love shall not be the master of my destiny. I will be strong with the strength of a man, and cast from me in scorn the enervating sorrow which is not worthy to weigh down a manly spirit. It is well for boys and women to weep, but for a man, every tear should turn into living fire, kindling afresh his aspirings after nobler things! Is not this very sorrow a stern admonition to him, not to treasure up his existence in the

narrow, flower-enwreathed circle in which it first opened, but to go forth and do the work whereunto he was appointed? You see, my dear Annesley, my philosophy has not wholly deserted me, and I hope you will receive even better proofs of it when you come; meanwhile, farewell. I suppose you will call at Oaklands before you leave Ethelwode; there may be some message from me.

“Believe me, ever,

“Your affectionate friend,

“R. TALBOT.”

This letter was a painful one, in every respect, to Edward Annesley. As Reginald had confidently expected, his generous nature was deeply moved, by the account of the melancholy state of their mutual friend; and he at once resolved on complying with his request, although it involved the necessity of parting with Ellen. Their separation would, however, only be temporary, and he could not hesitate, because of the passing sorrow it would bring to lend his assistance to his dying friend. Mr. Allen was then particularly well, and could easily dispense with him for a time; and Edward believed with Reginald, that Ellen herself would be the first to urge him to go, however painful their separation might be to her. A few hours, therefore, after receiving Reginald's letter, he was on his way to the castle, to tell her what had happened, and to take leave of her.

There were other and still more painful feelings awakened in his mind by this letter. He had been long acquainted with Reginald's love for his early playmate; and he had watched with anxiety, during the summer, the fierce conflict which he saw him enduring, the alternations of hope and

despair, which seemed almost to destroy the balance of his powerful mind. Now all hope was apparently gone, and Edward grieved deeply over the bitter disappointment, the blighted affections of his friend. He dreaded lest the fiery spirit, thus checked in its dearest hopes, should recoil upon itself, and lose, in the morbid sense of its wrongs, the aspiring and noble energy with which it had entered on its career.

The desperate calmness with which Reginald evidently strove to defy the blow which had fallen upon him, and to "whistle down the wind," the love which had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, till it had become a part of his very existence, only made Edward fear the more the reaction which must take place sooner or later; and he was confirmed in his resolution of going to —, by the conviction, that his society was as needful, and might be as beneficial to Reginald, as his professional assistance was necessary to Mr. Elridge.

Ellen's reception of the intelligence he brought was not such as to lessen the pain he felt. At first she was overpowered with grief at the thoughts of his leaving her, even for a few weeks; and then she tried persuasion, intreaties, and tears, to induce him to change his purpose. At length, finding all her endeavours vain, she turned angrily away from him, saying, that since he was so regardless of her feelings, the sooner they parted the better.

"Ellen," said Edward, gravely, "you are unjust; you know you are; and that, far from my being regardless of your feelings, they are of such importance to me, that by your giving way to them

at this moment, you are increasing tenfold the pain I already feel in leaving you. I expected better things from you; do not make me feel that I have been mistaken in hoping to find in you a true helpmate;—one who would cheer and strengthen me in the performance of duty, instead of adding to its difficulties.”

“Oh! Edward,” exclaimed Ellen, bursting once more into tears, “you do not love me as I love you, if you can speak so coldly at this moment; you do not know what you ask of me; you will go to other duties, other pleasures; I shall have nothing when you are gone; my existence is a blank without you, and yet you ask me to bid you leave me. I never had, I never shall have such stoical courage; if you wished for it in a wife, why did you choose me?”

At that moment Edward felt, indeed, most painfully that he should not have chosen her. It was worse than useless to think of that now, however; and driving the thought away, with a deep sigh, he addressed himself, with affectionate gentleness, to the task of soothing and comforting Ellen.

“You cannot doubt my love for you,” said he, in answer to her repeated and passionate complaint that his love was not like hers. “But such love as ours, Ellen, should not be a holiday thing, only fit for the hour of sunshine. It should be to us a principle of high and noble action, a mutual support in a time of trial and difficulty. Will you not, in this our first trial, show me that it is such to you?”

But Ellen was incapable of such an effort of self-control; and when he was forced to leave her at last, her grief was as vehement and unreasonable as

ever. Edward's heart was not less heavy than her own, as he set out on his solitary journey; for all his former misgivings as to Ellen's fitness for the lot she had chosen had returned with keener force than ever, and he thought of the future with more anxiety and less of hope than he had felt for many months.

CHAPTER V.

"He led her from the crowded dancing-room into the cool evening. Why does the evening, does the night, put warmer love in our hearts! Is it the nightly pressure of helplessness; or is it the exalting separation from the turmoils of life, that veiling of the world, in which, for the soul, nothing remains but souls!" — *Jean Paul*.—FROM CARLYLE'S *Review*.

Ellen awoke the morning after Edward's departure with a sense of dreariness and desolation she had never before experienced. She shrank from the long day opening before her, which was to be uncheered by his presence. She felt as if the object of her existence was gone. He had so long been all in all to her—her mind had been so absorbed by her engrossing love—he had been so interwoven with every thought, and feeling, and most trifling action, that his absence caused a void in the whole current of her life. She had not strength even to look forward to his return; she had been used for so many weeks to live for the present alone, feeding upon his presence as the daily bread of life, that she shrank back appalled at the prospect of days and weeks to be spent away from him.

She strove to find relief from the weariness which oppressed her in her usual occupations. But the book which she had been reading with Edward dropped from her hand, whilst her thoughts wandered away to him whose image and whose voice were associated with every page. She could not sing—he was

no longer there to listen breathlessly to every tone; there was no heart near to echo the expression of passion, and her voice was powerless, since there was none on whom to exercise its witchery. The silence and solitude of her own apartment, where every object was associated with his presence, were oppressive to her; and the society of her mother, and Mademoiselle Juliani, incapable as they were of understanding or sympathizing with her, was utterly insufferable.

To escape from both she resumed her old habits of rambling out of doors. She had scarcely remarked, whilst Edward was with her, the change from summer to autumn, or how the autumn had darkened into winter; but now there was a melancholy pleasure in marking the gradual decay of life and vegetation; the dreariness and stillness of the leafless woods were akin to her own feelings; and though every walk was connected with recollections of Edward, there was something in the influence of Nature which made those recollections a source rather of pleasure than of pain, and soothed her restlessness into peace.

But it was only a momentary influence. Her mind, overstrung by the constant excitement of the last few months, now that the excitement had ceased, sank into listless inactivity; unused as she was to moral discipline, the energy and principle, which would have enabled her to struggle with and conquer, this morbid depression, were wholly wanting, and she gave way to it without resistance.

Unfortunately for her, her intercourse with Louisa Conway had been of late much interrupted. The companionship of her strong-minded friend might have roused her to exertion, and saved her from the

dangerous inactivity into which she had sunk. But her engagement to Edward had already separated her much from Louisa. Love had engrossed every thought and feeling, and all lesser ties were absorbed and forgotten in that paramount one. The state of Louisa's mind at that time was also a barrier to their frequent and unrestrained intercourse, and thus Ellen was left to herself at the moment when she most needed support and guidance.

After a few days, the first acuteness of her grief passed away. She received a letter from Edward, and his cheering words and expressions of devoted love relieved the sense of desolation which had oppressed her. But the blank monotony of existence became all the more insupportable, now that her mind had not even its sorrow to dwell upon, and she craved for some new excitement to while away the time which yet remained of Edward's absence. In this state of mind she even hailed with joy the prospect of the country-ball at H——, of which Miss Fanshaw had spoken. It was something to think of, to look forward to — something which seemed to break the dreary space between the present and the, to her, remote future of Edward's return; and it was with more of her wonted elasticity of step and spirits that she set about her preparations for the occasion.

After about a week's discussion, during which Lady Ethelwode changed her mind twenty times as to whether she would or would not accompany her daughter on this her first appearance in public, to most mothers a momentous event, it was settled that Lord Ethelwode, who always thought it his duty to promote sociability, and to sanction such festivities by his presence, should act as Ellen's chaperon, and

that they should join Sir Charles Conway and Louisa, that the two friends might make their *début* together; an arrangement which afforded great satisfaction to both.

Louisa had looked forward to this ball with even more eagerness than Ellen. She had not seen St. John for two days, but they had parted the last time with more than usual confidence in each other. Never had Louisa's manner been so free from reserve; never had their conversation flowed on in such perfect harmony; and though Arthur still withheld any explicit declaration, each had then read the feelings of the other. The succeeding days had seemed wearisome, and it was with unusual anxiety that Louisa counted the hours till it was time to dress for the ball. She was almost handsome when, arrayed in hope and beaming with joy, she entered the library to tell her father she was ready; and he smiled upon her even more fondly than usual, and, as he kissed her glowing cheek, breathed a silent prayer to Heaven that she might be blessed in her new-found happiness, and guided aright through all the mazes of that yet untried passion.

The friends entered the ball-room at the most auspicious moment for producing a sensation. It was not yet sufficiently crowded to prevent every fresh arrival from being noticed, and Ellen's reputation for beauty had so far preceded her, as to make every one anxious for her appearance. Louisa was almost as much a stranger to the greater part of the assembly, and, as the only daughter of the rich Sir Charles Conway, was an object of scarcely less curiosity than Ellen. When their arrival was announced, therefore, there was a

general anxiety to see them, and all eyes were fixed on the door to watch for their appearance.

A murmur of admiration ran audibly round the room as Ellen entered it, leaning on Sir Charles Conway's arm; and the blush which mantled on her cheek as she perceived herself to be the object of general attention, only added to her exceeding loveliness. All made way for her as she passed on to the top of the room, and looked after her as she went as a being scarcely of the earth, earthy. The heiress was forgotten in this involuntary homage paid to beauty, and Louisa followed unnoticed by the crowd. But she felt no mortification, for she had forgotten herself in her pride in the triumph of her friend, and she did not know that the only one whose admiration she would have valued was amongst the throng.

St. John had arrived a few minutes before, and was standing at the other end of the room with Lord Caldwell.

"What a glorious creature that is!" exclaimed the latter, as his eyes followed Ellen in her progress up the room. "Did you ever see any thing so radiant as that countenance? And look how she moves! as if the very spirit of grace had embodied itself in that perfect form. By Jove! she is divine."

"Your admiration makes you quite a poet," said St. John, laughing. "She is very beautiful, certainly; but, in spite of all her beauty of feature, her countenance does not attract and rivet attention like Miss Conway's."

"Miss Conway! Good heavens, St. John! are you mad to compare that plain, stiff-looking girl to

such a being as Ellen Percival, the very beau-ideal of grace and loveliness?"

"You do Miss Conway less than justice," answered St. John, warmly; "her manner is too high-bred to be stiff; and that eloquent countenance, beaming with noble intellect, would make one forget features much less attractive than hers. Miss Percival's is mere physical beauty, which palls on the senses like all other things after a time; but Miss Conway's is the indestructible, ever-varying beauty of *mind*, which grows upon one day by day, exerting a more powerful influence the more nearly and constantly it is beheld."

"My dear St. John! I beg you a thousand pardons for my inconsiderate strictures; I did not know that you were in love with Miss Conway's *self*, I thought it was "*les beaux yeux de sa cassette*" which attracted your admiration, or I never should have risked affronting you by my blunt remarks. If it can promote your cause, I will tell her how gallantly you have taken up the cudgels in her defence. Not now, though, for I am particularly anxious to win her good graces just at present, as I have determined to persuade her or her father to introduce me to-night to my old enemy, Lord Ethelwode. I must get a footing in his house. Ellen's 'melancholy Jacques' has taken himself off, and left his treasure unprotected, and now is my time or never to come in and carry off the prize."

"And do you still persist in your honourable intention of marrying, by fair means or foul, another man's betrothed wife?"

"Assuredly I do, most grave and moral censor. Only consider, that the house of which she was

mistress would at once become the most *recherché* in London. As to the honour of the thing, I think it would be dishonourable in any man professing admiration of the sex, to allow such a peerless gem to remain hidden from public admiration. Besides, to speak more seriously, I will confess to you that at my age a man begins to feel that an empty home is but a cold and desolate thing. It is horrible to think that, when age and its infirmities come on, one will be left to the tender mercies of servants. A wife is a deuce of a bore in one's youth, but a capital thing when one gets old and sick, and one wants a nurse and companion at home. By heavens! it would almost reconcile one even to the gout itself, to have a creature like Ellen hovering about one's bed, ministering to one's wants, smiling away even pain itself!"

"I congratulate you upon your prudent foresight," said St. John, ironically, as he turned away almost with loathing from the heartless egotist, and moved towards the place where the unconscious subjects of the preceding conversation were seated at the other end of the room.

Louisa's eyes had for some time past been wandering over the crowd in search of his tall and graceful figure, and she instantly perceived him as he made his way towards her. Their eyes met, and St. John marked with a thrill of elation the deadly paleness and the crimson blush which succeeded one another as he drew near to her.

"I have, then, power over that stern, proud nature," thought he, exultingly. "She is mine; this very night shall decide our fate."

Yes; to this had come at last all Louisa's prudent resolutions, all St. John's worldly and selfish cal-

culations. The doubts and fears which Reginald's warnings had awakened in Louisa's mind had long ago been cast aside and forgotten in the conviction of St. John's truth and worthiness, which had gradually stolen over her heart. She, who had never known disguise, had gladly left the icy path of mistrust and caution, and soon she yielded her whole soul to the irresistible mastery of passion. Love, pure and full, and the stronger for the restraint it had momentarily suffered — love, in all the depth and power which belong to it in a mind earnest and thoughtful as hers, now filled her heart, giving fresh vigour to her intellect, more buoyant energy to her mind, new life to her whole being. And St. John, despite of his worldliness, loved her with feelings scarcely less deep and fervent than her own.

There is intense joy for the man who, having believed his eyes dimmed for ever, suddenly finds his sight restored to him. There is rapture for the poet or the painter, weakened by age, who has mourned that the torch of his genius was extinguished, when he finds that his numbers will still flow, and his hand realize the conception of his fancy. But there is joy beyond theirs to him whose mind, tainted and seared, but not utterly corrupted, suddenly awakens to the consciousness that all capability of deep and truthful feeling is not withered up within him. Tears, warm and pure as those of early youth, will flow again as the blessed assurance steals over his soul, and those tears are like the precious balm of repentance, softening and purifying the heart, melting away the gall of bitterness, and effacing the deep traces of corruption.

And thus was it with St. John; and, whilst under the influence of these new feelings, he sat, day by day, at Louisa's side, and watched her pure and beautiful nature unfolding all its treasures to him, he first knew reverence, and all high and holy things began to have for him a meaning and a power unknown before. Thus love was working its first regenerating effects, and the worship of the good and the beautiful began in the sanctuary which was opened to their influence.

Still his feelings were unuttered. As they had increased in depth and sincerity, he had lost his former confidence, and, with a humility which he had never felt before, he scarcely dared to hope that he had won the love of such a being as Louisa, and recoiled not only from the possible humiliation, but from the misery of a refusal. But her manner, both when they parted last, and now when he drew near her, dispelled all his doubts and fears, and he determined, as we have seen, to decide both their fates at once.

Whether it was the exciting influence of the place and hour, or that St. John's looks and manner had never yet so plainly told of his unuttered love, Louisa forgot that night both pride and reserve, and yielded more than she had ever done before to the influence he exerted over her. Never, in any of the many triumphs which before had gratified his vanity, had St. John felt any thing approaching to the exulting joy with which he saw the proud, self-possessed woman sink beneath his glance into the gentle, timid, trembling girl, and traced, in her subdued manner, in her changing colour, her downcast look, the workings of the passion he had called into existence in that lofty na-

ture, subduing it to his own. He felt that she was his, and the avowal of his own deep affection was trembling on his lips, when it was arrested there by the approach of Lord Caldwell. St. John drew back as he advanced, with a silent but energetic wish that he were a thousand fathom deep in the sea, with a mill-stone round his neck. His arrival recalled Louisa to herself, and, with a strong effort, she recovered the self-possession she had well nigh lost in the forgetfulness of uncontrollable emotion.

"I am come to ask a great favour of you, Miss Conway," said his lordship, as quietly as if his intervention at that moment had not left in suspense the destiny of the person he spoke to.

"A favour of me?" said Louisa, still half bewildered by this sudden awaking from her trance of passion.

"Yes, a great favour; but which, I hope, you will not refuse, seeing that, as a woman and a christian, deeds of charity should be delightful to you."

"What can you mean?"

"Simply this: I want you to introduce me to Lord Ethelwode. Ay, I see your astonishment; but really it is so very unpleasant to be constantly exposed to meet a person with whom one is not even on civil terms, that I am determined to put an end to this awkward position as soon as possible. Besides, we are no longer in feudal times, when a good warm family hatred was nourished through life and till death, and transmitted from generation to generation as a kind of heirloom, and I do not see why, because we were once opposed to one another at an election, we are to continue sworn foes for the remainder of our natural lives. So I

come to you, to ask you to take upon yourself the blessed office of peace-maker, and pave the way for our reconciliation by introducing us to each other."

"It is an office I would gladly undertake; but Lord Ethelwode is rather an awful person, and, unless I could first ask his permission. . . ."

"Ask! no, that would never do. He would refuse, of course. We must take him by surprise, and I will engage to exonerate you from all responsibility. Look; he is coming towards us now: do, pray, comply with my request."

Lord Ethelwode came up to them at this moment. He did not perceive, till he had joined the group, that he was actually face to face with his hated and despised *parvenu* neighbour; but, when he did perceive it, he was too proud to give up his purpose of speaking to Miss Conway, and retreat before his ancient enemy. Under these circumstances, it became an easy and natural thing for Louisa to introduce to each other two people, both conversing with her, and forming part of the same group.

With a woman's tact she seized the opportunity, and, Lord Ethelwode, taken by surprise, was forced to acknowledge Lord Caldwell's bow, and to reply to the unaffected and well-bred courtesy with which the latter expressed his pleasure at once more meeting his lordship on amicable terms, and his hope that past feuds and political rivalry would be buried in oblivion with the circumstances which had originated them. The reply was cold and haughty enough, however, to have repelled any other man, but Lord Caldwell's object was gained, and he was careless of the rest. He carried on the

conversation for a few minutes longer, with that peculiar power of adapting his manner to his auditors, which gave him an influence over every one he spoke to, and then, having again bowed low to Lord Ethelwode, and announced his intention of doing himself the honour of calling upon him at an early period, he left the group to resume the place beside Ellen, which he had scarcely quitted during the whole evening, except when she was called upon to join the dancers.

St. John returned to his, beside Louisa; but the spell beneath which she had forgotten that any other human beings existed save herself and him whose impassioned glance was fixed on her face, whose voice breathed like music into her ear, was broken. She had waked to the consciousness that other eyes besides his were watching the changes of her countenance, and her womanly pride recoiled at the thought that her feelings would be perceived and commented on, and made a subject for county gossip by such people as Mrs. Fanshaw and Lady Dashwood. All St. John's efforts could not win her back to the gentle mood from which Lord Caldwell's approach had aroused her, and he bestowed "curses, not loud, but deep," on the inauspicious intruder, who had thus come between him and his prize, at the very moment when it seemed within his grasp.

"She shall not elude me thus, however," thought he; "I will bear suspense no longer. I *will* know my fate to-night."

But in the ball-room he had no chance; Louisa was on her guard, and had armed herself with more than her usual panoply of reserve and dignity. St. John was meditating upon the means of drawing

her away from its influence without attracting attention, when Ellen came up to them with Mr. Hope.

"Are you not dancing?" said she. "Do stand up, and be our *vis-à-vis*; we cannot get one, and shall be obliged to sit down, if you will not help us."

"Will you dance, Miss Conway?" asked St. John.

"With pleasure," replied Louisa, glad to hide, in the movement of the dance, the agitation and internal struggle which, with all her self-command, she could scarcely conceal.

They took their places in the crowded quadrille, but it required some patience on the part of both Ellen and her partner, to endure the mistakes they perpetually made in the figures. Ellen had to dance through the *eté* alone, St. John seeming to have quite forgotten his part, till her laughing voice beside him reminded him of his neglect; and Mr. Hope in vain held out his hand to Louisa in the *poule*; hers was employed in clasping and unclasping her bracelet, whilst she stood in utter oblivion of the dance, listening to something St. John was uttering in a low voice.

"Thank you for being our *vis-à-vis*," said Ellen, smiling, as she passed them when the quadrille was over, "though we might have done almost as well with two chairs."

Louisa started and blushed.

"This room is insufferably hot, let us seek some cooler place for a few minutes," said St. John, drawing her away, lest her friend's remarks should freeze her once more into reserve.

Louisa allowed him to lead her on, and they passed through several rooms, more or less crowded,

till they reached one at the end of the suite, which was completely deserted. The window was open, and they drew near to it. Heated as they were by excitement and exercise, the keen frosty air felt scarcely more chill than a summer's breeze.

The high-wrought excitement of that evening was new and painful to Louisa; and now the sudden change, the darkness, the cooling atmosphere, produced such a revulsion of feeling, that, had she been alone, she would have wept, without knowing the cause of her tears. She almost wished she were alone; there was a burden on her heart, which, in the presence of another, could find no relief, least of all in *his* presence, which added intensity to all her feelings, and made the beating of her heart, the throbbing pulsations of her temples, seem almost audible. Thus she leant out in silence; and St. John, thinking that the sudden transition from an atmosphere of vanity and worldliness and conventional forms, to the holiness and purity of Nature, was well calculated to draw her into forgetfulness of the reserve she had imposed upon herself in the eyes of the world, was satisfied to let the spell work uninterrupted.

Her first words, however, convinced him that it had not worked altogether according to his wishes. There was something holy in that silent and beautiful firmament, which stilled the impulses of earthly passion, and which, when her mind had recovered some degree of composure, led her to other thoughts.

"How artificial are our notions of enjoyment," she said, looking up to the starry heavens while she spoke, "when we are content to shut out such a scene as this, for the vain empty frivolity of

yonder ball-room ! I often think, that if the dreams of some poets be true, and those bright worlds are inhabited by purer spirits, they must look down with more melancholy on our pleasures than on our sorrows."

"*You think thus,*" replied St. John, almost bitterly, "but how many are there, who are incapable of higher pleasures ; the common grovelling spirits of our earth, with whom you can feel less sympathy, than those celestial beings you were speaking of, might claim with you ! Yours is a nature, perhaps, only too lofty for the common uses of this world, and"

"This is mockery, Mr. St. John," cried Louisa, in a tone of reproach, "and I did not expect it from you, because I gave way to the natural feeling inspired by such a 'scene.'"

"And you wrong me by thinking for a moment, that I could speak in irony," replied St. John, earnestly, "I speak only what I feel to be very truth, a truth which has daily been sinking deeper and deeper into my heart. Have I not for weeks past watched every impulse of your mind ; have I not felt as if, day by day in your companionship, my own nature was in some degree purified and regenerated by the influence of yours ? Do I not know that your truth and nobleness of character have gradually brought back to me something of the truth and nobler aspirings of my own early youth, so long seared and deadened by the world ; and is it not that very character which has taught me to feel for you more than any other woman ever inspired to man, to feel ?"

Other words hung on his lips—words which would, probably, have decided the earthly destiny

of him who spoke and she who listened to them ; but they remained unuttered, for at that moment several people hastily entered the room, inquiring, in anxious tones, for Mr. St. John.

“ Here I am ! what the devil do you want with me ? ” asked the latter, irritated, beyond endurance, at this second interruption, at the most interesting moment of his life.

One of the intruders, who was St. John’s servant, answered, that an express had arrived for him from London, half an hour ago ; that he had come on with it from the abbey, and had been looking for him every where, to give him the letter he had brought. The messenger said there was not an instant to lose, which must excuse the intrusion.

St. John snatched the letter, tore it open, and hastily glanced over the contents. Louisa, who was watching him, saw a sudden paleness overspread his countenance, and, forgetting every thing in his suffering, hurried towards him with an anxious inquiry.

“ My father has just arrived in England, dangerously ill—dying,” he answered, hurriedly ; “ he has sent for me, and the medical man, who writes this, says I shall scarcely have time to reach him before it is all over.”

“ How dreadful ! but go,—go immediately, you may yet see him. . . . ”

“ I must go instantly,” said St. John, without moving, and speaking like one whose faculties were stunned.

Louisa felt for him, but dreading to let him lose another moment, she roused him from his apparent

lethargy, and urged him again to depart without delay.

"Yes, I must leave you," he exclaimed, starting; then, in a lower tone, he continued, "I must leave you at a moment when I had hoped—. But no matter now—this is no time to attempt to tell you all the feelings that have been gathering and struggling within me for months." He looked round—they were again alone. He snatched her hand and pressed it fervently to his lips,—“God bless you, Louisa!—dearest Louisa—let me call you so for once—whatever betide, I shall return soon, and then, if I am not forgotten. . . .” He stopped; he could not trust himself to say more—the moments were too precious.

“God bless you!” said Louisa, in scarcely audible accents, turning away to hide the tears, which, in spite of all her efforts, were filling her eyes.

Again he printed a passionate kiss upon her trembling hand, and then rushed from the room. A minute afterwards Louisa heard horses galloping at full speed down the street, and, exhausted by the excitement she had undergone, she sank down on the sofa, and, hiding her face in the cushions, wept convulsively.

To a disengaged spectator, any large assembly of human beings, collected together for a specific purpose, is always a curious field of speculation; and a ball-room, frivolous though the purpose be which calls them there, is not one of the least interesting. Whilst all seem, outwardly, animated only by the pursuit of pleasure; while all faces are dressed alike in smiles, it is curious to speculate on the wide diversity of feelings which this universal mask

conceals. How many are smiling to hide the convulsive twitch of mental anguish,—how many to conceal the weariness which pleasure brings after the freshness of life is gone,—how many to hide the aching sense of loneliness, which oppresses the heart in a crowd, where we feel that “faces are but as a gallery of pictures, and talk as a tinkling cymbal, where no love is !” What strong passions, what thoughts of good and evil, are working beneath that uniform appearance of light-hearted gaiety! What a strange, perchance a mournful, sight would that joyous assembly present, were the mask suddenly uplifted, and the thoughts of all those human hearts bared to the observer’s gaze!

Different, indeed, though both wore the same appearance of gaiety, had been the feelings of the two friends that night. The reader has already seen what had been Louisa’s need of the conventional mask; but none could look on Ellen, and think that the smiles which irradiated her brilliant countenance were assumed.

If some mournful thoughts of Edward had cast their shadow over her at the beginning of the evening, they had quickly given way beneath the influence of the place and scene. The evening had been one continued triumph to her. The murmur of admiration had followed her steps wherever she moved. Man and woman, young and old, noble and commoner, had alike paid homage to her transcendent beauty; she had been the star of the night: and ever near her, watching her in the dance, at her side as soon as it was over, Lord Caldwell had incessantly offered to her the incense of admiration, either in the delicate and ingenious flattery of his

words, or the scarce less openly expressed homage of his looks.

It was not in Ellen's nature to be indifferent to the admiration of one whose name stood high, not only in the provincial circle in which she then found herself, but amongst the distinguished men of Europe,—one who was notoriously indifferent to women, who had, for years, laughed to scorn the manœuvres of mothers and daughters, in the great market of matrimony, in which his rank and wealth had made him a coveted prize. Her heart beat high with triumph, at the sight of this haughty Benedict, not only subdued by her charms, but apparently glorying in his chains; and if a remorseful thought of the absent Edward did occasionally damp her exultation, it was quickly dispelled by the ready sophistry of vanity. She was not less true to Edward, because she took pleasure in the homage of another; was it not rather an additional triumph to him, that, whilst one so superior in wealth and station was at her feet, she yet preferred him before all others?

Lord Caldwell's penetrating glance easily read what was passing in her mind, and he resolved to make her vanity the means of improving still further to his advantage the absence of her lover.

"Where is Mr. Annesley?" he asked, in feigned ignorance of his rival's absence: "I have not seen him to-night."

"No—he is not here."

"Does he not countenance such worldly gaieties with his presence?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes, I believe: but he is not at Ethelwode at present. He is gone to pay a visit to a friend in Somersetshire."

"A friend! it must be a dearly-loved friend, indeed, that could induce him to leave Ethelwode at such a time as this."

"It is an old college friend, who is very ill, and asked him to take his duty for a short time."

"And you, of course, with true womanly generosity, urged him to go. Poor Annesley! he must have found that even your commands could sometimes be difficult to obey."

The dart was well aimed. Ellen could not but remember with some bitterness, how different was the real state of the case, and the tone in which she answered that he had gone, not in obedience to her, but because he thought it right, told her crafty companion that he had touched the right chord.

"I see that Mr. Annesley's reputation for superior sanctity is not unmerited," continued he. "Such a self-sacrifice could only have been accomplished by one raised above the common passions and weaknesses of humanity. What an enviable being, to be thus able to subdue every feeling to the calm supremacy of reason, to acknowledge no mistress of his actions, but cold stern duty! How I wish *my* feelings were thus controllable! But I fear much," added he, in a lower voice, "if *I* had been in his place, I should have forgotten every thing but the misery of leaving you. I could only love, 'not wisely, but too well.'"

Poor Ellen! every word fell on her heart like gall. As she listened, every instance of Edward's steady adherence to duty in opposition to her entreaties, of his constant calmness of demeanour, flashed across his mind, and they seemed to her now so many proofs of indifference. "If he loved me, would all this be so?" was the question which

naturally arose in her troubled mind; and she writhed in agony at the bare thought that he, to whom she had yielded her whole heart and soul, gave her but a cold and measured affection in return. To hide her uneasiness from her companion's searching glance, she rose abruptly, and began moving across the room, saying that she must look for Louisa, whom she had not seen since she had danced opposite to her. Lord Caldwell offered his arm, observing, with a meaning smile, that he had seen them leave the ball-room together immediately afterwards, and that they were, doubtless, still in some of the less frequented rooms. At this moment Ellen perceived the object of her search making her way towards them, and she hurried forward to meet her. Louisa's step was as firm as usual, and a smile was on her lips, the conventional smile of the ball-room, but her face was so deadly pale, that Ellen anxiously inquired, as she joined her, if she were ill.

"No, no, I am perfectly well," said Louisa, impatiently, with a slight blush.

"But why are you alone? I thought Mr. St. John was with you."

Louisa explained with unfaltering voice the cause of St. John's absence, but Ellen, accustomed to watch her friend's countenance, saw her face grow still paler, from the violence of the effort she made to suppress all signs of emotion.

"Dear Louisa, let us go home. I am sure you are ill," whispered she.

But Louisa would not go, or acknowledge any indisposition. Her pride was alarmed, lest her altered looks should be attributed to their real cause, and she laughed and talked with such well-

assumed gaiety, that even Ellen was deceived, and more than once during the evening, whilst revolving in her mind the painful doubts that Lord Caldwell had awakened, she envied her friend's light-heartedness, and wished that she, too, could be once more like her, "fancy-free." Louisa's purpose was fully effected, for even Mrs. Fanshaw was heard to declare that "she supposed there really was no truth in the reports about Miss Conway and Mr. St. John, though it had looked so much like it; for, although he had gone off in such a *jiffy*, Miss Conway had never been seen in better spirits." So much for our insight into each other's hearts!

CHAPTER VI.

Garcia. Ed altra man più infame
Ti manco à ciò?

Cos. Scelta ho la tua; ciò basta.

Gar. Perir vo pria.

Cos. Nol dire: il certo pegno
Io tengo in man del tuo obbedir pronto.

ALFIERI.

Lord Caldwell soon found that his introduction to Lord Ethelwode would not, of itself, suffice to open to him the gates of the castle. He called there two days after the ball, but Lord Ethelwode was not, or would not, be at home. The card was duly returned, and there seemed to end all the advantages he had hoped to derive from the introduction.

Ellen, however, remarked that, whereas, before she seldom met him in her rides and walks, she now scarcely ever went out with her stepfather, but by some strange coincidence Lord Caldwell was sure to cross their path. Sometimes he merely bowed and passed on, but at others he would join them, undismayed by Lord Ethelwode's repulsive haughtiness of manner, and exert with such success his extraordinary powers of conversation, that he actually won over the indignant baron to something like sociability. His presence was gladly welcomed by Ellen, to whom it afforded an agreeable relief from the wearisomeness of her *tête-à-tête* rides with her stately stepfather; and, if Lord

Caldwell was deficient in many of the qualities which made Edward the most delightful of companions, his conversation, at least, served to fill up, in some degree, the void created by her lover's absence.

Her bright smile of welcome, and evident pleasure in his society, deceived him into believing that he had already obtained some ground in her affections. But the delusion was quickly dispelled.—One day that he had joined her and Lord Ethelwode in their ride, he was received by her with a cold indifference, almost equal to her stepfather's. In vain did he exert all his eloquence—all his wit—all the subtle flattery which he knew so well how to administer. Ellen listened unheedingly. He was piqued and astonished at this change of mood, but the cause of it was soon made known. She had received that morning a letter from Annesley, announcing his speedy arrival; and the prospect of his return had made her indifferent to every thing else. Her thoughts were with him already, and Lord Caldwell found that he was unheeded and forgotten. His rage and vexation knew no bounds when he discovered that he had been deceived by a girl like Ellen—that she had welcomed and made use of him to supply her lover's place—and now that his rival was returning, she cast him aside as lightly as she would have done a useless plaything.

"She shall pay for this," thought he, as he rode home, after having received Ellen's careless parting bow at the gates of the forbidden castle. "Does she think that I am her dog, to wait on her smiles, and be caressed one day and kicked out the next? Does she think that I—I, William Caldwell, who

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have fought my way to fame and power, against the haughtiest aristocracy in Europe—trampling their most cherished prejudices under my feet—am to be bearded by a school-girl and a country parson?—No, by heavens, I have said it and I will do it! She shall be mine, if I lose half my fortune in the attempt.”

It required, however, all Lord Caldwell's dogged determination of purpose to persist in an enterprise, the difficulties of which seemed to increase instead of diminishing. His introduction to Lord Ethelwode had, as we have seen, wholly failed in opening to him the doors of Ellen's home. He was still rigidly excluded; whilst his rival was returning to be a daily and welcome guest, admitted at all hours into Ellen's privacy, with every opportunity of strengthening his hold over her affections, already so powerful, and favoured by her stepfather's friendship and approbation. Lord Caldwell felt that, unless he could reverse the tables, and obtain access himself into the castle and drive his rival out, he had no chance of success. If he could accomplish this, however, he assured himself, with the sanguine confidence of a man unused to failure, that Ellen would not long resist the suit of one who could lay at her feet rank and wealth like his, and whose homage was in itself a triumph to all her woman's vanity.

But how was this to be accomplished?—How was the rankling animosity of years to be smoothed away?—How were the inveterate prejudices of a man like Lord Ethelwode to be overcome, so as to induce him to open his doors to the man he hated above all others, and close them against one whom he considered as a protégé of his own—who was

the accepted lover of his step-daughter, and the friend of his only son?—Even Lord Caldwell was forced to confess that these difficulties were well nigh insurmountable; and he formed and rejected plan after plan, without being able to fix upon one that offered a reasonable prospect of success.

One there was indeed, which, from his knowledge of Lord Ethelwode's character, he felt assured would overcome every obstacle. The strongest motive of Lord Ethelwode's hatred to him had been, as we have seen, his refusal to sell back to him the lands which he had purchased from his father; and the pertinacity with which he had persisted in that refusal, although Lord Ethelwode, becoming more and more eager, in proportion to the difficulty of obtaining his object, had offered him in exchange double and treble their value.

Lord Caldwell loved money much, but he loved yet more to thwart the haughty nobleman, who despised him as an upstart, and who refused, in spite of the eminence he had achieved for himself, to recognize in him any thing but the son of a low-born mechanic. Now, however, that he wished to conciliate his ancient foe, he felt that, by retracting that refusal, the principal cause of animosity between them would be removed, and the most formidable obstacle to his schemes at once overcome. But such a retraction involved the sacrifice of long-cherished feelings. He, too, hated his haughty enemy—hated him with the bitter hatred of one whose whole life had been spent in struggling against the prejudices of which he was, as it were, the incarnation. In thwarting and humbling him, he seemed to triumph, not only over an individual, but over the whole detested class of which

he was the representative. By retracting his refusal to sell the abbey, he would lose this power over him; he would sacrifice his long-cherished revenge for the scorn and contumely which his high-born neighbour had heaped upon him; and, moreover, put into his hands the means of successful political rivalry, as the possession of the abbey lands would give Lord Ethelwode an immense preponderance in the county.

As Lord Caldwell revolved these things in his mind, he felt that even the possession of Ellen could not compensate for such sacrifices. No woman was worth being obtained at so costly a price. She might marry the country curate, or any one else she pleased, and live and die in the obscurity she had chosen: it mattered little to him. His pursuit of her had been the whim of a moment. He would give it up, and think of her no more.

That evening, however, as he sat alone in his spacious library, where every means and appliance of luxury were profusely scattered, his mind reverted to Ellen, in spite of his resolutions. As his eye wandered over the gorgeous apartment, its magnificence was forgotten; he felt only its solitude. Splendid though it was, it had a cold and dreary look. There were no traces of woman's gentle and familiar presence; no books, or music, or work scattered about, giving it the appearance of home and comfort. Every thing was in perfect order, except that a vase on one of the tables was filled with faded flowers, which the servants had forgotten to replace.

Lord Caldwell's eye rested upon it for a moment, as he remembered having once seen Ellen filling a vase of flowers at Oaklands, and how gracefully

and skilfully she arranged them, looking herself the while fresher and lovelier than the blossoms which lay around her. He rang the bell, and angrily demanded of the footman who answered the summons, why faded flowers were left in the room to poison the air with their nauseous smell. The man carried away the offending vase, and when he had closed the door, and the sound of his footsteps had died away along the suite of apartments beyond, the perfect stillness which his entrance had broken again reigned throughout the room.

There was something apparently oppressive to Lord Caldwell in that stillness, for he turned to the fire, and began poking it with a degree of energy which the state of the blazing hearth did not seem to require. The flame burnt brightly up, and threw a strong light on the empty *bergère* opposite. Lord Caldwell involuntarily thought how different would that fireside seem if Ellen's graceful form had occupied the vacant seat; if the dreary stillness of that room could be broken by the silvery tones of her voice.

"What a cursed thing this solitude is!" muttered he, as he threw down the poker, and flung himself back in his chair; and almost, for the first time in his life, he felt that fame and power, and wealth and the world's golden opinions, could not satisfy all the cravings of man's nature; that there was a happiness which they could not give, and without which even they might seem but empty baubles.

In spite of himself, his mind dwelt with a feeling akin to envy on Edward Annesley's humble home, which was so soon to become Ellen's. Bright images of their cheerful fireside, gladdened by

Ellen's presence ; of laughing children, replacing with new hopes and new ties those that time had destroyed ; of love smoothing the rough places of life, and gilding its decline,—rose up in painful contrast with his own solitary home, and the unloved and unhonoured old age which awaited him. There was something galling in the thought that the poor country curate would enjoy a happiness that all his wealth and all his power could not procure for the successful statesman.

As he pondered on these things, party animosity and personal hatred gave way beneath their influence, and once more he determined that, cost him what it might, he would bear away the prize from his daring rival. He seized a pen, and wrote a note to Lord Ethelwode, requesting a private interview with him, for the transaction of important business, at the earliest convenient opportunity. This done, he rang the bell, and desired that it should be sent over to the castle the first thing in the morning, and then again threw himself back in his chair, to deliberate, without one remorseful thought, on the further means necessary to accomplish the destruction of the happiness he had so lately envied.

Lord Ethelwode was both astonished and indignant at Lord Caldwell's note. It appeared to him at first merely an artful pretext for renewing the intercourse between them. It was of a piece with his late impertinent attempts to force himself into his society, and as such he was rather inclined to treat it with cool contempt, and leave it unanswered. But a second perusal altered this determination. The words "important business" aroused his curiosity : he remembered the rumours

of Lord Caldwell's intention of selling the abbey; and a hope flashed across his mind that it was to this that the words referred. On the strength of this hope, he resolved to grant the required interview, which he fixed for that day, at five o'clock in the afternoon.

In spite of himself, it was with some anxiety that he awaited the appointed hour; and when the servant threw open the door, and announced Lord Caldwell, he had not yet made up his mind whether to receive him with dignified courtesy as a guest, or with haughty coldness as a presuming intruder. His manner, therefore, was a mixture of both, as he returned Lord Caldwell's polite and easy salutation, and motioned to him to take the seat opposite his own on the other side of the blazing fire.

Both sat for a few moments in silence, Lord Caldwell pondering how best to open his business, Lord Ethelwode waiting that he should do so. As the fire-light fell strongly on their faces, they would have made an admirable picture. The somewhat vulgar features, redeemed, however, by the intellectual expression of the upper part of his face; the keen and restless glance, and half-cringing attitude, of the ambitious and unprincipled *roturier*, contrasted well with the more refined and aristocratic lineaments, characterised only by haughty pride, the half-disdainful, half-inquiring gaze, the erect and dignified carriage, of the high-born baron. The latter was the first to break the silence.

"May I ask you, my lord," said he, haughtily, "to explain, with as little delay as possible, what is the *important business* which induced you to seek this interview? I confess I am at a loss to imagine

what business in which *you* are concerned can also concern *me*."

Lord Caldwell's colour rose at the insulting haughtiness of this speech. For a moment his mind revolted at the thought that he was going to minister to the pride he hated; but he had gone too far to recede, and, assuming a perfect calmness of manner, he quietly replied—

"I believe I shall have no difficulty in proving to your lordship that the importance of this business to *both* of us fully justifies me in thus trespassing on your time and attention; unless, indeed, I am mistaken in supposing that you still feel the same desire you did some years ago to repurchase that part of your family estates which is now in my possession."

Lord Caldwell's quick eye marked the sudden brightening of his companion's countenance, and he continued.

"If such should be the case, however, it would be needless for me to enter upon the subject which brought me here, and I will detain your lordship no longer."

"Pray sit down," exclaimed Lord Ethelwode, forgetting his haughty reserve in his joy at the unexpected prospect thus opened before him of obtaining at length the great object of his ambition. "I am ready to listen to any thing you have to say on that subject."

"I will then come to the point at once. Some years ago, when you repeatedly caused offers to be made to me for the repurchase of the abbey and the lands belonging to it, which formerly made part of the Ethelwode estate, and which I bought from your lordship's father, you may remember that I

positively refused to part with them on any terms. Circumstances have induced me to alter that determination, and the purpose of my visit is to inform you that I am now willing to retract my refusal, and, in case you should still be of the same mind with regard to the property, I am ready to let you repurchase it on the terms mentioned in this letter, the last I received from your agent on the subject, or on any other terms which shall be decided upon after a valuation by proper authorities."

Lord Ethelwode started from his chair.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, with passionate vehemence; "I shall then live to see the house of Ethelwode restored to its ancient splendour! Name your own terms, my lord," added he, turning to Lord Caldwell, who was watching, half with scorn, half with interest, this exhibition of a ruling passion. "The value of the land to me is not according to the amount of dirty pounds, shillings, and pence it may produce—I value it as the hereditary possession of my forefathers, as the fair guerdon which they won from kings by their knightly achievements, at the price of their blood; and, to ransom it from the hands of strangers, I would give my own. To me those lands have no equivalent in gold."

"I will not take advantage of your disinterestness," said Lord Caldwell, "and will abide by the terms which you offered to me through your agent in our last negociation." (Lord Caldwell well knew the sum offered was treble the value of the estate.) "Money is no object to me, any more than to yourself."

"I may then consider this as a settled matter?"

said Lord Ethelwode, in a tone almost trembling with eagerness.

"On one condition, my lord; and it was to state this condition that I desired to transact this business with you personally."

"What is it?"

"That you will receive me in your house as a suitor to your step-daughter, Miss Percival, and that you will favour my addresses to her."

Lord Ethelwode staggered back in the excess of his astonishment.

"You a suitor to Ellen! Surely you must be aware that she is already engaged to Mr. Annesley, and, therefore, that what you ask is wholly out of my power."

"Pardon me. I am perfectly aware that it is reported that Miss Percival was, perhaps still is, engaged to Mr. Annesley. But, at Miss Percival's age, such an engagement can scarcely be considered irrevocable, and I have reason to believe that it would not be difficult to induce her to break it off."

"Very possibly, my lord; but, though Miss Percival may be prepared to act the part of a heartless jilt, I am not to be an abettor in so dishonourable a course of action. I esteem and like Mr. Annesley—I owe him a debt of gratitude for his care and attention to my son, and I will certainly not be a party in ruining his prospects of happiness. I beg, therefore, that this subject may never be mentioned again between us."

"As you please, my lord; but in this case our negotiation concerning the sale of the abbey is also at an end, since you refuse to comply with the condition which I have attached to it."

"Do you mean to imply, then, sir," exclaimed

Lord Ethelwode, starting up with flashing eyes, "that it was as a *bribe* that you held out to me the recovery of my hereditary estates—that you came here, thinking to *buy* me over to become the auxiliary of your dishonourable intentions—that you hoped to play upon me, and use me as a tool for accomplishing your purposes? Do you mean to say that such were your intentions in seeking this interview?"

"By no means," answered Lord Caldwell, with perfect coolness; "my intention was simply to make a fair and honest bargain, or, if you will, exchange. You are very desirous to recover that part of your family estates which is in my possession; I am equally desirous to obtain your step-daughter's hand: but neither of us can attain his object without the participation of the other. I therefore propose that you should assist me to gain mine, in return for which I am willing to enable you to accomplish yours. It seems to me there is neither bribery nor dishonour in this."

Lord Ethelwode made no reply. He walked up and down the room, chafed almost to exasperation by the coolness of his antagonist, and the footing of equality which the latter assumed. More than once he put forth his hand to ring the bell, and order his servants to kick the insolent upstart out of the house; but he restrained himself. He felt that on his forbearance depended his last hope of realizing his life-long dream of family pride. Subduing his irritation with a strong effort, he turned again to Lord Caldwell.

"You speak, sir, as if Miss Percival's hand were mine to give to whom I pleased. She is perfect mistress of her own actions; and, if I were ever so

desirous to direct them, I have neither control nor influence over her."

"Nor do I ask you to exercise any. All I require is, that you afford me a fair opportunity of urging my own suit, by promising me full and free access to Miss Percival in this house, and by discouraging the addresses of my rival, Mr. Annesley. Surely this is no unreasonable request. It is but asking you to pursue a line of conduct which a prudent regard to the welfare of Miss Percival would naturally point out to you. I offer her rank, wealth, a brilliant position in the world; Mr. Annesley has nothing to offer her but an obscure home in a country parsonage, and his love—no doubt a rich donation in its kind, but, in these unromantic days, a very insufficient capital to begin life upon. Miss Percival's extreme youth and ignorance of the world may have led her to believe that these could suffice for her happiness; but you and I, my lord, both know how speedily such illusions would be dispelled by the hard reality, and she will be the first in a few years to thank you for having saved her from the miseries of such a fate. Surely these considerations must set your scruples at rest."

"It is not with regard to her that I have any," said Lord Ethelwode, impatiently; and, as if speaking to himself, rather than to his companion, "her fate is in her own hands. But Annesley—Annesley—that high-minded, noble-hearted fellow. He saved my boy's life—he watched over him in his illness like a brother—he has since acted with the most noble disinterestedness towards him. No—I cannot consent to any thing that would injure him. Ask any thing but that, Lord Caldwell—name any sum you please, as the price of the

abbey—fourfold the value of the land, if you will,—but I cannot sacrifice Annesley.”

“Then,” said Lord Caldwell, “I will take my leave at once, as on no other terms but those I have named will I consent to sell the abbey. You said it had no equivalent in gold to you—neither has it to me. I have had the place many years—I have taken much pleasure in improving and embellishing it, and it is endeared to me by many associations. For money only, I will never part with it.”

So saying, he rose and advanced towards the door.

“Stop,” said Lord Ethelwode, as he laid his hand upon the lock.

Lord Caldwell instantly turned, and his keen eye read, at a glance, the struggle which was passing in Lord Ethelwode’s mind.

“Is there no other way in which this matter can be adjusted?” asked the latter, after a few moments’ silence.

“None whatever.”

Lord Ethelwode again walked up and down the room in irresolution. Lord Caldwell’s eye followed him, marking, exultingly, the power he exercised over the haughty nobleman. But nothing of this feeling was allowed to appear in his manner, and his tone was studiously conciliating when he spoke again.

“I cannot but honour,” said he, “your generous regard for this young man; but allow me to say, that your scruples on his account seem to me overstrained. What you are pleased to call sacrificing him, is merely preventing him from making what all the world will agree in calling a most im-

prudent match. Miss Percival is not fitted, either by nature or education, to be a poor man's wife;—she would soon become merely a splendid burthen to him, and such an ill-suited union could only end in misery to both. By preventing it, you are merely acting the part of a friend to all parties."

Lord Ethelwode did not answer. The struggle in his mind at that moment, between his family pride and his sense of honour and justice, was fearful. His regard for Annesley, and his hatred to Lord Caldwell, both tended to strengthen him against the temptation. It was galling to think of sacrificing his son's friend to the man he hated—of yielding to conditions so peremptorily made, by one whom he considered as infinitely below him; but, on the other hand, the object of his life-long ambition—that object which had been the dream of his youth, the eager desire of his manhood—to attain which, he had sacrificed his independence, his happiness, in marrying, for gold, a woman he despised—was suddenly placed within his grasp, and could be obtained at the cost of one secret act of doubtful integrity. The temptation was fearfully great. He had not strength of mind to cast it at once resolutely from him, and spurn the tempter from his presence. He allowed himself to listen to Lord Caldwell's specious arguments, although he inwardly recognised their fallacy; and the more he suffered his mind to dwell upon the coveted prize held out to him, the weaker became his sense of the wrong which he must commit to attain it. With the ready sophistry of passion, he argued, that it was a small thing to do evil that good might come.

The saying, "that the woman who deliberates

is lost," is no less true in its application to every human being in the hour of temptation,—Lord Ethelwode yielded; but, at the same time that he resolved upon doing what he felt to be a mean and dishonourable action, he determined to carry it off with a high hand towards the man who had tempted him.

It was with even more than his usual haughtiness of manner that he said, after a long pause,

"I have decided upon complying with your request, my lord, as I have satisfied myself that it will not in any way injure Mr. Annesley. If Miss Percival really loves him, she will marry him in spite of all your endeavours; if she does not, it is the kindest and wisest thing I can do for him, to prevent their union. You may, therefore, consider this matter settled; and now let us arrange the terms for the sale of the abbey."

It was, by no means, however, Lord Caldwell's intention to fulfil his part of the contract, before Lord Ethelwode had fulfilled his, and thereby to give up his hold over him. Foreseeing Lord Ethelwode's determination, he had drawn up a deed, by which he engaged himself to make over the abbey, and the lands belonging to it, to Lord Ethelwode, on the payment of a certain sum, the day of his marriage with Miss Percival; failing this marriage, the transaction was null and void. This deed he now gave to Lord Ethelwode, to sign. The latter indignantly remonstrated against a mode of proceeding which seemed to imply a doubt of his honour, forgetting that he had himself forfeited that honour by the very act of pledging it to such a transaction.

Once more he was on the point of breaking off

the whole business, and flinging the deed at the face of his insolent tempter. But the temptation had gathered strength from his first concession to it, and his weakened integrity was powerless to resist it now. He signed the paper with sullen haughtiness, which was but a poor covering to hide his real humiliation from the keen eye of his exulting enemy.

Lord Caldwell took his leave immediately afterwards, for it was no part of his plan to exasperate the feelings of animosity against him, which already existed in the heart of Lord Ethelwode, by obtruding his presence on him longer than was necessary at such a moment. He knew that, though he himself departed, he had left a sting behind him, which would be a never-ceasing torture to the haughty spirit of his former opponent; and he laughed in his heart, as he threw himself back in his carriage, to think how amply and subtly he had gained his revenge, for all the scorn and contumely Lord Ethelwode had heaped upon him for years.

CHAPTER VII.

"This smooth discourse and mild behaviour oft
Conceal a traitor. Something whispers me
All is not right."

ADDISON.

"I have asked Mr. Hope, and Mr. Dashwood, and Lord Caldwell, to dine here to-day," said Lord Ethelwode, as he sat at breakfast, a few days after the scene recorded in the last chapter. The words were spoken carelessly, as if there was nothing extraordinary in the announcement; but when Ellen suddenly looked up to seek some explanation in his countenance, his face was completely hidden by the newspaper he held in his hand.

"Lord Caldwell going to dine here!" exclaimed Lady Ethelwode, roused for a moment from her usual inane indifference to everything that was going on, "why, I thought he was your greatest enemy?"

"Nonsense," said Lord Ethelwode.

"But I am sure I have heard you say fifty times that you hated him, for not choosing to sell back to you the old ruin, and the rest of the property he bought of your father."

"One may ask a man to dinner, though one does hate him, if it suits one's convenience," answered Lord Ethelwode with bitter emphasis.

"But how can it suit your convenience," per-

sisted his wife, "to ask a man to dinner who has never set his foot within the house, who made you lose three contested elections, and whom you called, only the other day, an insolent upstart?"

"Never mind, that is my business, and not yours," replied the courteous husband; "do not talk of what you do not understand."

"But I *do* understand that I do not like to have a man in the house who, you have told me, over and over again, had defrauded Egbert of his lawful property, and would always be a thorn in his path, as he has been in yours."

"It is in Egbert's interest that I am acting, and I desire that you will be particularly civil to Lord Caldwell. I need scarcely repeat this recommendation to Ellen," he added, with a sneer; "she has forestalled my wishes."

"Lord Caldwell is too agreeable and too courteous a person, not to claim civility from any one he chooses to speak to," said Ellen, reddening at her stepfather's insinuation.

"Well, whatever be the motive, I shall be glad to see you civil to him in this house, in which, for the future, he is likely to become a frequent guest."

Ellen looked her astonishment, but Lord Ethelwode's peremptory tone plainly showed that he would not be questioned, and the conversation dropped.

For some time she sat conjecturing what could be the motive of this sudden change of conduct towards Lord Caldwell; but as she really cared very little about the matter, her mind soon reverted to the all-engrossing subject of Edward's return, which was fixed for that day. Lord Cald-

well was forgotten, as she sat the whole day watching from her window the turning of the road by which Edward must come, although she knew that he could scarcely, by any possibility, arrive till after dark. And when the hour at which he might reasonably have been expected was long gone by, and he had not arrived, and she was forced to leave her post and go down to dinner, so completely had her disappointment erased every other thought, that she started when Lord Caldwell advanced towards her, with as much surprise as if she had not been expressly told that he was to be there.

Lord Caldwell interpreted her evident confusion into emotion at his unexpected presence, and his manner assumed an *empressement* and a tenderness, which she could not but perceive, in spite of her pre-occupation. There was something displeasing to her in this lover-like demeanour in another, when her whole soul was filled with the thought of Edward, and she repelled Lord Caldwell's marked attentions, with a coldness so evident, that, to avoid the ridicule of appearing as an importunate admirer, he ceased altogether to devote his attention to her, and applied himself to observe the different members of the family, into which he had thus forced himself, and to find out their respective capabilities of being used as tools, in the prosecution of his designs upon Ellen.

There was a *gêne* over the dinner-party which was felt by all present. Lord Ethelwode was evidently ill at ease with his new guest, and his constrained and haughty politeness froze all attempts at easy conversation. Lady Ethelwode could not exert herself beyond giving monosyllabic

answers to Lord Caldwell's observations, and Ellen was silently and sadly pondering the causes of Edward's delay.

Lord Caldwell, however, industriously applied himself to rouse Lady Ethelwode's inanity. It was of consequence to him to know what sort of assistance he might expect from Ellen's mother, and his low voice and peculiarly quiet manner so far won upon her as to induce her to comply with her husband's injunctions to be civil to him.

"When do you go to town, Lady Ethelwode?"

"I suppose Lord Ethelwode will go up for the meeting of Parliament, but I do not think I shall go at all. I scarcely ever move, do I Mademoiselle Juliani?"

"Scarcely ever," replied Mademoiselle Juliani, leaning to speak across Lord Caldwell, who had been for some time wondering who the little dark foreign-looking woman, with a curious expression, half cunning, half servile, in her small restless black eyes, could possibly be.

"I had understood you meant to bring Miss Percival out this year. It really is quite uncharitable to deprive the world of the excitement her appearance would create."

"I certainly had meant to take her to town this spring, but you know, as circumstances have turned out, it would be quite useless, and I am rather glad to escape the dreadful fatigue of *chaperoning* her. It would be too much for me; do you not think so, Mademoiselle?"

"Oh! certainly, too much for miladi," answered the ready echo.

"But any person, with no daughters of their own, would be too glad to relieve you of that ex-

ertion, and to enjoy the reflection of the triumphs such beauty as Miss Percival's would ensure."

"I think she certainly would have been admired," replied Lady Ethelwode, following the direction of Lord Caldwell's glance, which was fixed upon Ellen; "she is very like what I was at her age, but there is no use thinking of that now; since she has taken this foolish, romantic fancy into her head, it does not signify whether she would be admired or not."

"Very true. I honour your self-denial in sacrificing your share of the triumph Miss Percival would obtain to your maternal regard for her wishes; few mothers would be willing to make such a sacrifice. After having brought up such a daughter, to lose the pleasure of bringing her out — it is really maternal heroism; do you not think so, mademoiselle?"

Mademoiselle Juliani was so much astonished at finding herself appealed to by so great a personage as Lord Caldwell, that she instantly gave her usual echo with so much eagerness, that Lady Ethelwode felt convinced that she was a victim to maternal affection, and that Ellen's engagement to Mr. Annesley was robbing her of her lawful rights.

Lord Caldwell had accomplished his object, and he left her to chew the cud of discontent, which he had administered, and exerted himself to make the conversation general. His lively wit and ready flow of language were so successfully exerted, that even Lord Ethelwode's coldness and hauteur yielded to their influence; and he condescended to take his part in the conversation, whilst Ellen could not but acknowledge to herself, that he was one of the most agreeable men she had ever met with, and that even Edward had not the same power to dissipate

the stately chillness of their dinner-parties. But if Edward could not, like him, "set the table in a roar," there was a music in his voice which gave a charm to his lightest words; there was more impress of mind and feeling in one sentence of his, than in all Lord Caldwell's brilliant conversation, and she sank back into her abstractions; and his lordship had the mortification to find that not even his most lively sallies could win another smile from her.

"What is the matter with you this evening, Ellen?" said her mother, when they left the dining-room. "We have had the most agreeable dinner possible, and you have been sitting all the while, looking as gloomy as if some great misfortune had befallen you."

"And do you think it not a misfortune," answered Ellen, with quivering lips, "that Edward should not have come to-day, as I expected, after being away six weeks?"

"Nonsense, child! as if a man ever came at the exact minute he was expected. It is too childish of you, Ellen, to fret yourself in this way, all because that stupid Mr. Annesley is a day later than you thought; and very unkind to me, after all I have done for you, to make yourself look such a fright just when I want you to look particularly well."

"What does it signify how I look, when Edward is away?"

"Edward! Edward! nothing but Edward!" said her mother, impatiently; "I wish you had never seen Edward. He has ruined all your prospects in life, by putting this silly romance into your head; and I think it is very hard upon me, to be deprived of

all the satisfaction I might have had in your appearance."

"My dearest mother, what can you mean?"

"I mean what I say, and Lord Caldwell thought so too."

"Lord Caldwell! what business has he to interfere with me? I hope he has not made his way into the house to meddle with things which do not concern him."

"Lord Caldwell is too agreeable and sensible a man to do any thing improper. I am sure, I wish you had taken into your head to fall in love with *him*, instead of that stupid, penniless curate; there would have been some sense in that. But you always would have your own way, as a child, and, I suppose, you will now. I am sure, I have not strength to battle with you;" and her ladyship, exhausted by the unusual length and energy of her speech, threw herself back, pettishly, into her *chaise-longue*, whilst Ellen, hurt beyond measure at the manner in which her mother had spoken of Edward, hastily left the room, to hide the tears she could not restrain.

"And I too," exclaimed she, passionately, as she threw herself on her knees, in her dark and solitary room, and hid her face in a chair, "I too almost wish I had never seen him. From the first hour that I knew that I loved him, I have had nothing but suffering, and sorrow, and anxiety, and humiliation—and, after all, he never did, he never can love me, as I love him."

At this thought, her tears burst forth with fresh violence, and it was long before she could regain sufficient composure to obey the reiterated summons sent by her mother, through Mademoiselle

Juliani, to return to the drawing-room. The gentlemen had been there some time, when she made her appearance ; and Lord Ethelwode's frown, as she entered, and her mother's angry looks at her swollen eyes and pale cheeks, nearly upset her again.

She was hastily retiring towards one of the deep recesses of the windows, when Lord Caldwell interrupted her with a petition that she would sing.

"I cannot sing to-night," she answered, abruptly.

"Why not, Ellen?" said Lord Ethelwode, sternly; "you sing every night ; what is this caprice about not singing now?"

"Ellen, I desire you to sing," said her mother, who, for once, had heard what was going on ; and, in her fit of displeasure against Ellen, determined to show her authority.

Ellen sat down to the piano-forte, and, making a violent effort to restrain her tears, began singing in a low, faltering voice. She got through the song with some difficulty, and then retired to her seat, in spite of Lord Ethelwode's frowns, and her mother's audible expressions of pettish displeasure, saying, that Mademoiselle Juliani could sing, if Lord Caldwell wanted any more music.

Lord Caldwell was particularly anxious to hear more ; and Mademoiselle Juliani took Ellen's place at the instrument, and began singing a loud bravura from the last new opera. This was exactly what he wanted ; he drew back into the corner where Ellen was seated, and began talking to her under cover of the music.

"Will you forgive me for having asked you to sing?" he said, in his lowest and gentlest voice. "I had not the smallest idea that I should give you

pain by doing so, or I would rather have cut my tongue out."

"You gave me no pain," said Ellen, touched by his kind manner, when every one else seemed angry and displeased with her. "I am not well to-night, or I would have sung to you with pleasure."

"Then, if you are not well, why do you tire yourself by sitting up here?—why not go at once to the rest you so much need? I will engage to prevent—not your being missed, that were impossible, but any unpleasant remark being made upon your absence."

"Thank you," said Ellen, with a look which made Lord Caldwell's heart smite him for his treachery. "I will gladly accept your offer, for I really am not fit for any society but my own."

"If you think that, you will not half value my self-sacrifice in renouncing it," whispered he, gently pressing the hand she held out to him, as she rose and wished him "good night." She made no answer; but he caught a glimpse of the blush which rose to her forehead as she glided out of the room.

He did not consider himself bound, when she was gone, to fulfil the promise he had made, as she was never likely to know whether he had done so or not; and he had no wish to destroy Lady Ethelwode's feeling of displeasure against her daughter, which he had taken so much trouble to awaken. He had pressed Ellen to go, because her absence left him free to bestow his whole attention upon Mademoiselle Juliani, whom he had at once fixed upon as the best person in the house to become his tool.

He now, therefore, took his place by the instrument, to her surprise and almost alarm. She was so little used to any thing but neglect from the

usual visitors at the castle, that she scarcely knew in what manner to receive this extraordinary civility, nor how her patroness might be pleased to look upon any attention bestowed upon her *souffredouleur*. Lord Caldwell left her no time to cogitate long upon the subject. He asked for song after song, and mingled with his expressions of admiration (which, indeed, were unfeigned, the Italian being a perfect musician) well-turned compliments on her skill in forming such a pupil as Ellen.

The poor *dame de compagnie* was bewildered—intoxicated with this strange incense of praise; and Lord Caldwell, satisfied that he had secured her devotion to his interests, left her to play his part with the other personages of the drama he meant to enact. He succeeded so well, that when he took his departure at a late hour, every one but Lord Ethelwode agreed that he was likely to form a most agreeable addition to their society; and the baron himself, though he was silent, expressed no dissent from the opinion.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Oh! how this spring of love resembleth
Th' uncertain glory of an April day;
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away!"

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Edward's return had been delayed by some accident which had happened to the coach by which he was to travel. Finding it was not fit to proceed, he took his place in the mail, and arrived at home just as Mr. and Mrs. Allen were sitting down to breakfast, and speculating rather uneasily upon the causes which could have delayed one so proverbially punctual in all his arrangements.

It was yet too early, after he had changed his dress, to go up to the castle, and he therefore allowed himself to be forced by his kind old grandmother into Mr. Allen's easy-chair, whilst she made him some fresh tea, and bustled about, searching for every thing which could tempt the appetite of the weary traveller, who must, she thought, be quite exhausted by his sleepless night in the mail-coach, an exertion which, to her, who for thirty years had not travelled beyond the limits of her husband's parish, seemed scarcely less tremendous than a journey over the deserts of Arabia.

"Now tell me all about what has been going on here during my absence," said Edward, when she

at last sat down by the fireside, and took up her knitting.

Mrs. Allen knew that this meant, "Tell me all about Ellen;" and, although she had expected it, she was sorry he had entered upon the subject. When Edward went away, he had begged her to watch over Ellen as she would over her own child; and, at first, her task had been easy, for Ellen had gladly come to pour out all her sorrows in the ear of one who listened to them with the gentle and soothing sympathy of a mother, and who was never weary of hearing of Edward. But, as the violence of Ellen's grief subsided, and she began to entertain other thoughts, she had gradually withdrawn herself from Mrs. Allen's society. The kind-hearted old lady was grieved; but she comforted herself with the thought that it was very natural that so young a girl should not long find pleasure in the society of an old woman like herself.

This consolation, however, did not suffice her long. There were not wanting good-natured friends to tell her of Ellen's success at the ball, of Lord Caldwell's evident devotion to her, and her apparent satisfaction in his attendance. Whatever credit she might refuse to the reports of her gossiping acquaintance, Mrs. Allen could not but feel that Lord Caldwell's frequent appearance in Ellen's society, when walking or riding, was well calculated to confirm them; and, with eyes sharpened by her jealousy for Edward, and her affection for Ellen herself, she easily read in the latter's open countenance, when she spoke to her of Lord Caldwell, her consciousness that she had received his attentions with more pleasure than became her as Edward's affianced wife.

All this rose to Mrs. Allen's mind at Edward's

question, and she could not bear to embitter the first hour of his return home, and, perhaps, sow the seeds of dissension between him and his betrothed, by relating all that had grieved her of late in Ellen's demeanour. "Better let her speak for herself," thought she, and she therefore eluded the question as much as she could, and began talking of parish matters, the poor people, the schools—any and every thing, except Ellen.

Edward felt the omission, but some inward feeling restrained him from asking questions. He, too, thought it was better that Ellen should speak for herself, better that no one should come between them; and so he ate his breakfast in silence, whilst Mrs. Allen went through long explanations of certain disturbances in the workhouse, and the unreasonable demands of some of the old women there.

"Now I have breakfasted, I must begone, my dear mother," said Edward, at length, rising from the table, as the clock struck eleven, "they must have done breakfast even at the castle by this time; I will go there immediately."

Mrs. Allen did not attempt to detain him, and in a few minutes he was on his way. His mother's silence concerning Ellen made him feel anxious and troubled. Some of his old misgivings, mingled with new and undefined fears, rose up in his mind, and damped the eager joy with which he had anticipated seeing her again. He walked hastily on, striving to drive away, by rapid motion, the perplexing and gloomy thoughts that assailed him; but as he approached the castle, his emotion grew so powerful, that he felt himself unable to confront the indifferent gaze of the servants and the rest of the family; he resolved, therefore, to walk round

to the window of Ellen's sitting-room, which opened upon the court; and if she were there alone, to enter that way, and thus avoid passing through the public apartments, and running the risk of being detained by either Lord or Lady Ethelwode.

Ellen was, as he had anticipated, in her room, and alone. She was sitting listlessly by the fire, thinking how long and anxiously she had looked forward to that morning, which was to have been the first after Edward's return; and how different it was now from what she had anticipated. She was so intently occupied with her sad musings, that she did not perceive that the sunbeams on the floor were intercepted by a man's figure darkening the window; and Edward had to knock several times against the panes, before he could rouse her from her reverie.

The first glance, as she started and turned round, showed her who it was. She sprang forward, uttering a cry of joy; and in a moment, the window was opened, and she was in Edward's arms, sobbing for very excess of happiness. All Edward's misgivings vanished as he pressed her to his heart, and gazed on that face, whose beauty was too bright and pure for the mind within to be touched even with the common taint of mortality.

"And now, dearest," said he, after the first bewildering joy had in some measure subsided, and they were seated together on the sofa, in sober certainty of bliss, "now tell me every thing that has happened to you since I went away; all that you have done and said, and thought and felt."

Ellen laughed at this moderate request; but the next moment, she blushed as she remembered that

there were some things she would have been sorry to be forced to tell, and she sighed as she answered :

"Ah, Edward, I am afraid I have little to say that you will like to hear. I have been very idle and good-for-nothing ever since you went away. I was too unhappy at first to do any thing, and afterwards—"

"Afterwards!" said Edward, smiling; "having got into so comfortable a habit, you thought it a pity to give it up."

"Perhaps that was it," said Ellen, laughing in her turn; "at all events, it is very fortunate for me that we are to spend our lives together, for I grow foolish and helpless when you are away. I cannot sing when you are not there to listen to me; and when I tried to read the books you recommended, I found I could not understand them without you to help me. Then, when I went to see the poor people as you wished, I felt so awkward without you; I felt that I could not speak to them, and comfort them, and advise them, as you do; and I saw they felt it too, and so I left off going: in short, you must not leave me again; indeed, Edward, you must not, for I can do nothing as I ought when you are away."

What could Edward answer to such words as these? How could he blame one who so frankly blamed herself, and whose love for him was the cause and apology for every thing? The subject was at once dismissed, and Ellen, in her turn, questioned him as to the circumstances of his visit.

He had been paid for the sacrifice he had made, by seeing poor Mr. Elridge return much improved,

even for his short season of rest, and his anxious wife wearing once more a smile upon her lips, and Edward had been the means of being further useful to them, by procuring him an assistant, in the person of a young man who was glad to take the duty for some months, in return for Mr. Elridge's giving him a title to orders. Ellen inquired after Reginald Talbot, but this was a less satisfactory subject. He had stayed some time with Edward, but his mind had remained in the same disturbed state, with changeful fits of despondency and proud indignation: this, however, Edward did not speak of, and he merely mentioned, that, on leaving him, he had started to make a tour of the manufacturing districts, as he thought more practical information than he possessed upon the state of the country would be useful to him, in case he went into parliament. He did not add, that this was one of the thousand plans of active employment, by which Reginald hoped to conquer mental suffering, and triumph over the power of love.

They had sat there long, much longer than either of them was aware of, conversing happily together, when they were interrupted by the entrance of a servant, whom Lady Ethelwode had sent, to tell Miss Percival that Lord Caldwell was in the drawing-room.

"Lord Caldwell!" exclaimed Edward, as the man shut the door. "How does he happen to be a visitor here? How has the old feud between him and Lord Ethelwode been made up?"

"That is more than I can tell you," said Ellen. "Louisa Conway introduced them to each other at the county ball, at Lord Caldwell's desire, I

believe; and my stepfather was furious with her for doing so, and was as violent as ever against Lord Caldwell afterwards, though the latter did all he could to conciliate him. Then, all of a sudden, yesterday morning, it was formally announced that he was to dine here, and that he was likely henceforth to be a frequent guest at the castle, and we were desired to be very civil to him. This is all I know of the matter; the whole business seems to me an incomprehensible mystification."

Annesley could not help her to an explanation of the mystery. When he remembered Lord Caldwell's undisguised admiration of Ellen, and the unscrupulous character of the man, he could not help fearing that this inexplicable reconciliation had some reference to her. There were such slight grounds, however, for this conjecture, that he carefully refrained from mentioning it to Ellen. He now rose to take his leave.

"Are you going already?" said Ellen, half reproachfully.

"Yes, I think a three hours' visit long enough at a time; I do not want to wear you out with my society. Besides, you must obey your mother's summons, and I have a great deal to do after playing truant so long."

"But you will come back to dinner?"

"Certainly, if Lord Ethelwode asks me, which he will have the opportunity of doing, as I am going to call upon him now. It is but fair, after being the whole morning in his house clandestinely."

Lord Ethelwode was in the library with his son when Edward entered. Egbert ran to meet him with joy scarcely less than Ellen's, but his father's greeting was more formal and embarrassed. His

conscience smote him as he saw his boy clinging to Annesley, and the brotherly demeanour of the latter, with the recollection how treacherously he had dealt with him in his absence.

Edward felt that his manner was more cold and formal than it had been since the first days of their acquaintance, and he could not help connecting the change with the sudden reconciliation between him and Lord Caldwell. Both felt relieved when Egbert interrupted their constrained conversation by begging Edward to come and see all the improvements he had made in his garden, the new pony his father had bought for him, and the bridge he had been trying to build.

"You will dine with us, of course," said Lord Ethelwode, as Edward was leaving the room. He had been debating in his own mind for several minutes previously, whether he would give the invitation or not; but he felt that it would not do to break off with Mr. Annesley so abruptly, and he was glad to be able to do any thing which would annoy Lord Caldwell. The invitation was accepted, and Edward took his leave.

"And I have bound myself down," thought Lord Ethelwode, when he was once more alone, "to ruin the prospects of that noble fellow, and drive my son's friend from my house, to promote the interests of that low-born scoundrel. I, I, Baron of Ethelwode, dare not ask without hesitation the man I like to my own table, and am forced to receive the man I hate! By heavens! it shall not be; I will break through this degrading compact, and spurn the insolent villain from my house. Better a thousand times give up to him the estate of my fore-

fathers, and send my own after it, than submit to this degradation."

But it is easier, when once a man has become the servant of dishonest purposes, to make bold and indignant resolves to shake off the yoke, than to carry them into execution. Before Lord Ethelwode had time to act upon the honest impulse of the moment, other influences were at work to counter-act it. His low-minded ambition clung to the prize the tempter had held out, and the specious reasoning with which he had deceived himself once, returned now with the additional force of previous conquest, and made justice and honesty kick the beam in the wavering balance of his mind.

The wretched slave of his ruling passion gave up with a sharp and bitter pang this momentary resistance, and in degrading weakness bowed once more his neck to the yoke. He had yet to learn that this was but a small portion of the bitterness of the bondage to which he had submitted himself. He had yet to learn how much worse than disappointed ambition—than humiliation in the sight of men—yea, even than poverty and scorn, is the agony of the proud spirit secretly and helplessly struggling against the conscious degradation of the chains which one evil action has coiled around it.

Edward soon perceived that Lord Caldwell's presence at the castle was not the only disagreeable novelty he was to find there. Lady Ethelwode, with whom he had always been a great favourite, now treated him with a degree of coldness, often mixed with as much displeasure as her indolence would allow her to exhibit. Whenever she talked to any one in his hearing, she gave out various obscure innuendoes on the folly of poor men marrying, and

the presumption of people who looked above their station, with other palpable signs of petty pique, which Edward could be at no loss to understand, and which, though he despised them, pained him as coming from Ellen's mother.

He observed, too, that it was always after a morning visit from Lord Caldwell, or an evening spent in his society, that these fits of displeasure came on; and, although he strove to drive them away, unpleasant suspicions of Lord Caldwell's dealings arose in his mind.

Lord Ethelwode showed no displeasure, but his manner had resumed the cold stateliness of their first acquaintance, mingled, however, with something of embarrassment. At times he would relax into something of his former cordiality; but at the moment when Edward began to think that his late reserve had been accidental, and that all was restored to its old footing between them, some sudden feeling would cloud Lord Ethelwode's countenance, and freeze him into more icy stateliness than before. He still asked him to dinner occasionally, but Edward felt he was no longer considered a member of the family, as he had been before his absence.

There were other and more decided symptoms of altered feeling. For some time after his return, Edward had, as before, given up some hours every morning to reading with Egbert. One day, however, the latter made his appearance with a look very unlike that with which he used to meet his friend, and without his usual load of books under his arm.

"Well, Egbert, what is the matter?" cried Edward, as the boy came in. "Are you looking so

unhappy at the prospect of beginning your studies, or have you dropped your books in the brook by the way? Or," added he, as a sudden fear came over him, "is any thing the matter with Ellen?"

"No, nothing is the matter with Ellen." Edward drew a deep breath. "But—but I am very unhappy," said the boy, bursting into tears. "Papa says I must not come any more to read with you."

"Did you ask him why?" said Edward, with a painful feeling.

"Yes: he told me that he did not like it; that he was putting himself under an obligation to you, and that he meant to send me to a private tutor's. I won't stay there, though, that's one thing, for I never will learn from anybody but you, and I will soon oblige them to take me away, and bring me home again."

However flattered Annesley might be with these expressions, as regarded himself, he thought it necessary to convince Egbert that he had no wish to see him prove his affection for his friend by flying in the face of his father. He had some trouble in persuading him, that he need not necessarily hate the man who might be chosen as his tutor, and that it depended on himself whether he learnt well with him or not. He succeeded at last in inducing him to promise acquiescence to his father's wishes, but he could not, and perhaps scarcely wished that he could, diminish the boy's grief at parting with his old and trusted friend. He was himself much grieved, as there seemed in this resolution of Lord Ethelwode's more than met the ear, and he resolved at once to ask an explanation from his lordship.

He found Lord Ethelwode at home and alone in his library, intently occupied in examining a plan of the Ethelwode estate, as it had been before it was dismembered. As Edward entered, he hastily thrust it away, and the blood mounted visibly to his forehead, as he received him with even more than his late coldness of manner.

Edward entered at once into the subject of his visit, and requested to know whether it was from any deficiency on his part, that he had determined to withdraw Egbert from his care.

"Not at all," was Lord Ethelwode's reply, as he turned away, with evident embarrassment, from Edward's inquiring look. "No one could, I believe, have done so much for my son, and I am most grateful for the disinterested care you have shown him. At the same time," he added, haughtily, "I think myself bound to show that my disinterestedness is not less than your own. I do not choose it to be said, that *my* son is educated for nothing, like a pauper's child at a charity-school; and as you have repeatedly refused any remuneration for your services, I must decline putting myself under any further obligation to you. It is time, besides, that Egbert should leave home, where his mother and sister's foolish indulgence, and I confess also my own weak partiality, are ruining him as fast as possible. I have therefore decided upon sending him without delay to the clergyman who has the charge of Lord Edwyn's and Lord Littledale's sons, where he will find other boys of his own age and rank, and where the evil effects of his home education will, I hope, be counteracted."

There was no reply to be made to this explana-

tion. Annesley felt that Lord Ethelwode had a perfect right to dispose as he pleased of his son, and could only be sorry that he should think he incurred any obligation by accepting the willing services of one who was so soon to be connected with him by the ties of relationship. But this part of the subject was instantly waived by Lord Ethelwode, and Edward was forced to depart, without having obtained any further elucidation of this abrupt change in his intentions.

He next questioned Ellen; but although she had perceived the change, and was both hurt and indignant at it, she was equally in the dark as to its cause. She had once felt inclined to attribute it to Lord Caldwell's sudden and unaccountable influence over both Lord and Lady Ethelwode, but he always spoke so highly of Mr. Annesley before her, and his manner towards him was so courteous and friendly, that it was scarcely possible to have more than vague suspicions of him, so vague that Edward thought it better not to dwell upon them at all.

"It is no use troubling and poisoning our minds with distrust and suspicion," he said, at the close of a long conversation on the subject; "this change may throw some difficulties and vexations in our path, which we had not expected, but so long as we are true to each other, dear Ellen, nothing can permanently affect our happiness. Whilst *you* remain unchanged, I can easily bear every thing else."

Ellen's answering look gave the assurance better than words could have done, that her affection was unchanged—unchangeable; and for the time she felt, as strongly as Edward did, that their love was

a tower of strength, against which the malice and ill-will of others could never prevail. It was not always, however, that she could maintain this lofty confidence; and when Edward was not with her, and that was now frequently the case, some of her old faithless forebodings would come over her.

Edward was not a proud man, but he felt it due, both to himself and his profession, not to continue a frequent visitor in a house where his presence was so evidently unwelcome to both master and mistress. He and Ellen, therefore, only met now on the rare occasions when Lord Ethelwode asked him to dinner, or when he could snatch an hour or two from the engrossing duties of his vocation, as curate of a large parish, to take a walk with her. At those times, Ellen forgot every thing else in the happiness of his presence; her own individuality seemed absorbed in his; and his hope, his strength, his calm cheerfulness, became hers for the time being; but as soon as he had left her, she seemed to sink down again, as the creeper sinks to the ground when the stem it clung to is taken away. She would then feel both harassed and mortified at Lady Ethelwode's now perpetual lamentations over her perversity in throwing herself away upon an obscure country curate. She had neither strength of mind nor patience to bear with equanimity the little daily, hourly annoyances which seemed now, without any reason, to result from her engagement.

It was impossible to accuse Lord Caldwell of instigating them, for, whenever he was present, and he was now almost a daily visitor at the castle, he seemed only anxious to shield her from them, and, more than once, Ellen had felt grateful to him for his unobtrusive kindness, and the tact with which

he drew away her mother's attention from her when she was in low spirits and heart-sick, or diverted her from the favourite topic of her daughter's obstinacy and folly.

But worse, far worse than all that others could inflict, were the inward doubts and fears which sometimes assailed her — doubts of the fulness of Edward's love, self-tormenting fears and suspicions, recollections of his opposition to her wishes, of his unbending firmness, of a thousand little things in his manner and demeanour, which her morbid feelings magnified and distorted. It was strange that this state of feeling always recurred after any time spent in Lord Caldwell's society, even though Edward's name had not been mentioned between them, or her engagement even alluded to; and it would often last till Edward came again, and the first tones of his frank, manly voice, which seemed the voice of truth itself, drove away for a time all doubts and fears from her mind.

Lord Caldwell watched with secret rage this effect of her lover's presence: it was the rock on which his most skilful machinations invariably split; and he felt that, so long as she remained within its influence, all his arts, though they might succeed in making her miserable for a time, must ultimately end in failure. He determined, therefore, at whatever cost, to remove her beyond the circle of that powerful spell, and he proceeded to accomplish this design with the same unprincipled and dogged determination with which he had carried on the other parts of his plan.

CHAPTER IX.

“ If Cassio do remain,
He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly.”

Othello.

Lord Caldwell's plans for separating the lovers were greatly favoured by Egbert's departure to his new tutor's. So long as the boy was at the castle, he found it impossible to prevent Ellen's frequent intercourse with Edward. If, as often happened, he was detained from her by his professional duty, or Ellen was prevented walking with him by some manœuvre of Lord Caldwell's, Egbert was always ready to carry to the parsonage the closely-crossed note in which Ellen poured out the thoughts and feelings she was prevented from uttering otherwise, and no allurements however strong, no temptation however powerful, could induce him to abandon his trust. Even the prospect of obtaining the object of his highest ambition, in driving Lord Caldwell's pony phaeton, failed to make him forget Ellen's bidding, and Lord Caldwell chafed in secret indignation at being foiled in all his attempts by a schoolboy.

The Christmas holidays, however, were now over, and, after many delays caused by Lord Ethelwode's reluctance to part with his son, a day was at length fixed for his leaving home. Everybody in the cas-

tle, except Mademoiselle Juliani, who was the chosen victim of all Egbert's practical jokes, and who detested him accordingly, was grieved at the departure of the high-spirited, generous boy, whose mirth so often gladdened the gloomy family circle. Lord Ethelwode forgot his usual sternness as he fervently blessed his darling son, and, when Egbert was gone, a sense of desolation fell upon him such as he had never experienced before, and the proud man wept like a child, as he sat in his solitary library, and *felt* that he was alone.

For the first time in her life, Ellen's heart yearned towards her stepfather. Their love for Egbert was a bond between them, and she would have felt relieved in mingling her tears with his. But the grief of such a nature as Lord Ethelwode's could be witnessed and shared by none; and each sorrowed apart for the absent son and brother. Lady Ethelwode's grief was as much less than theirs as her feelings were in all cases weaker. When once assured that Egbert was not to be a fag, and that it was not a necessary part of a schoolboy's education to be roasted alive, or to be fed upon tallow-candles and shoe-blackening, she allowed herself to be comforted; and, as Egbert had never bestowed much of his society on his indolent, sickly mother, she missed him much less than his father or sister, or even than the family at the parsonage.

By Edward his loss was felt in a two-fold sense. There was no one now, when he was unable to go up to the castle, or when he was deterred from doing so by Lord Ethelwode's forbidding manner, to give him tidings of Ellen, or bring one of those precious notes, whose overflowing affection was like balm to his mind, harassed by the almost incessant duty

entailed upon him by an unusually sickly season, and the scenes of want and misery he was daily called upon to witness without having the power adequately to relieve. Ellen did not like to trust any other messenger, for, once or twice, when she had done so, the notes had never reached Edward, and all his endeavours had been fruitless to discover the cause of their mysterious disappearance. The intercourse of the lovers was now, therefore, restricted to those rare meetings, when the one could escape from his engrossing duties, and the other overcome the obstacles which some strange fatality seemed perpetually throwing in her way.

One morning, about a month after Egbert's departure, Lord Ethelwode was riding alone along the hill-side above the village, when he was joined by Lord Caldwell. Ever since their memorable interview in the castle library, he had avoided as much as possible being *tête-à-tête* with his ancient enemy, and the latter had shown little desire to force himself into his society when Ellen was not with him. This morning, however, in spite of Lord Ethelwode's repulsive manner, which said as plainly as a manner could do that his presence was unwelcome, Lord Caldwell was not to be shaken off. He was resolutely blind and deaf to all Lord Ethelwode's hints, and went on talking with perfect unconcern of the weather, the next harvest, the sickness in the village, nowise dismayed by Lord Ethelwode's freezing silence. The latter was meditating a desperate attempt to rid himself of his pertinacious companion, by wheeling short round and galloping home, when, as they turned an angle of the plantations, they came in sight of Annesley and

Ellen, at a little distance before them, walking slowly towards the sea-shore.

For the first time, Lord Ethelwode turned towards his companion, and, with a saturnine smile, observed, as he pointed to the lovers—

“Your suit does not seem to prosper quite so speedily as you expected, my lord.”

“No,” replied Lord Caldwell, laughing; “I am afraid the goodly acres of Ethelwode Abbey will remain in my possession, after all; in which case, we must mutually comfort each other for our disappointment.”

Lord Ethelwode bit his lip so tightly that the blood started from the wound. He raised his whip to chastise the insolent scoffer, but a moment’s thought restrained him, and he bestowed the lash on his unoffending horse with such force that the high-spirited animal reared and plunged, and, for several minutes, the baron was fully occupied in quieting him again.

“This is the very subject on which I wished to speak to you,” said Lord Caldwell, in his usual calm voice, as soon as he saw that Lord Ethelwode was again able to attend to him. “Unless we take some better measures than we have hitherto done, neither of us will attain his object.”

“That is your look-out and not mine,” said Lord Ethelwode, irritably. “I have done my part—yours is to win the lady, and I cannot congratulate you on your success.”

“She would not be worth winning, if she could be won so lightly. But I confess our chances of success are very uncertain, and are likely to become more so, if Miss Percival remains under the influence of her romantic swain, yonder.”

"That is unfortunate," said his companion, with a sneer, "as we do not live in the times when a damosel might be carried off from home and lover, and wooed and won at leisure in the castle of her ravisher, having no means of escape or refusal. Nor, I am afraid, could we, with impunity, even shut her up in the keep at Ethelwode, and exclude her from all communication with every one but you. So that I do not see how you are to win her, except by fair rivalry; in which, for a man of your lordship's rank, fortune, and talent, you seem singularly unprosperous. Either you must be very unskilful, or Ellen must be very blind."

"That is precisely what I wished to say. She *is* blind—blind from her ignorance of the world, and of the real value of the advantages she is sacrificing—and I conceive that to cure this blindness will be the best means of promoting our object."

Nothing irritated Lord Ethelwode so much as Lord Caldwell's thus alluding to a community of interest between them, and it was with more asperity than before that he asked how his lordship proposed to enlighten Miss Percival's mind.

"Take her to town, my lord—a season in London is the best of all cures for the blindness of ignorance and the fever-fit of romance, which is a necessary disease every body must undergo once in their lives, like the hooping-cough or meazles, and which skilful treatment will soon conquer."

Lord Ethelwode, who, cold and stern as he was, knew something more of the nature of love than Lord Caldwell, was by no means so sanguine as to the effect of greater worldly knowledge on Ellen's feelings. He was, moreover, chafed by the cool manner in which Lord Caldwell took upon himself

to dictate to him a course of action ; and he answered coldly, that, even were he disposed to adopt Lord Caldwell's suggestion, the London season would not begin for some time to come ; and that, before then, Mr. Annesley would probably obtain a living, and the obnoxious marriage be accomplished.

"Not if you wish to prevent it. Parliament meets in a few days. If you take Lady Ethelwode and Miss Percival up to town with you, Mr. Annesley cannot follow her, as his duty detains him here, and Miss Percival will thus be at once removed from his influence. The rest will be easily managed ; I shall obtain my bride, and you the possession of your family estates."

Again the struggle was renewed in Lord Ethelwode's mind. His whole soul revolted from the degradation of the fact, which all his pride could not conceal from him, that Lord Caldwell was bribing him to accomplish his dishonourable purposes. He could have felled to the earth the insolent, low-born tempter who dared tamper with him thus, and yet he had not strength to cast from him the temptation. Ever as he determined indignantly to refuse to take one step farther in the crooked path he had entered, the thought that the object of his long-cherished ambition lay within his grasp arose in his mind, and drove away the better thoughts which, for a moment, had gained the mastery.

Lord Caldwell easily discerned the conflict which was going on within him, and at once seized the advantage it offered him. He worked so skilfully on the ruling passion, administered so subtilly the sophistry which makes evil itself appear as an angel

of light, that Lord Ethelwode once more yielded, and, before they reached the castle, it was determined that he should follow Lord Caldwell's advice, and that Lady Ethelwode and Miss Percival should be apprised, without delay, of his intention of taking them to town with him for the meeting of parliament.

Lord Caldwell engaged to reconcile Lady Ethelwode to this sudden and extraordinary exertion; but this was a matter of small consequence in Lord Ethelwode's opinion. He was too much accustomed to consider his weak, silly wife as a mere appendage of his wealth, to trouble himself whether his will was agreeable to her or not.

To his associate, however, it was of consequence to conciliate Ellen's mother, and he performed his task with so much skill and success, that, in a short time, Lady Ethelwode was persuaded that she had been rather ill-used in being buried so long in her husband's gloomy castle; that it was of vital importance to her, in her delicate state of health, to be within reach of the best medical advice; and of infinite consequence to Ellen that she should be prepared, by a season in London, for the important duties she would take upon herself as a curate's wife; if, after all, she did marry a curate; a doubt which Lord Caldwell had taken care to instill into Lady Ethelwode's mind, and to strengthen by exciting in her as much ambition and maternal vanity as her nature was capable of feeling.

Ellen was thunderstruck when she heard of this arrangement. She saw at once all its evil consequences to herself and to Edward,—total separation from each other,—the indefinite delay of their

marriage, and the train of other evils which would ensue from these.

Edward felt the blow as keenly as she did. Even his fortitude was not proof against the prospect of six months' separation, in addition to the already sufficiently wearying suspense and anxiety of a long engagement. In the early part of that engagement, when many hours of each day were spent in each other's society, and Annesley was looked upon as much as a member of the family at the castle as if he had been already Ellen's husband, they had felt the delay which Lady Ethelwode's condition imposed, to be but a slight drawback to their happiness. But now that the aspect of things was so wholly changed, that Edward was estranged from the castle by the repulsive coldness with which he was met there, and that there was an evident desire shewn to create obstacles to their union, both felt that each day's delay threw back into greater uncertainty the prospect of its accomplishment.

After an anxious and sorrowful consultation on the subject, into which Mr. and Mrs. Allen were admitted, Edward determined upon addressing himself once more to Lady Ethelwode, and to urge her to consent to their immediate union, without insisting farther on the condition of his obtaining a living, which, however desirable in a professional point of view, was by no means necessary to enable him to support his wife in her proper station of life.

It was some days before Edward could obtain the desired interview. Lady Ethelwode foresaw the nature of his errand, and, aware that she had no good reasons to oppose to his arguments,

and that he was not a man likely to be satisfied with subterfuge or evasion, she found means to be always either engaged, or too ill to see him when he came.

One day, however, Edward followed the servant so closely into the forbidden boudoir, that he was in the room, and beside her *chaise-longue*, before she could frame an excuse to avoid his visit. There was no escape now, and her ladyship was obliged to resign herself with as good a grace as she could to hear what he had to say.

In a few words he explained to her, as he had done several times before, that the fortune left him by his relation had made him independent of his profession; that, although not large, it was sufficient to maintain Ellen in comfort and respectability; and, finally, he besought her not to delay their marriage any longer by an unimportant condition,—and, thereby, expose them both to the misery of a long separation.

Lady Ethelwode fidgeted in her chair whilst he was speaking. There was something in his straightforward, earnest manner, which she felt to be very uncomfortable. She had intended to treat him with cool contempt, to make him feel his presumption; but, somehow or other, she could not do either; and she felt, to her infinite discomposure, that she must give him an answer,—and, what was more, a straightforward and a courteous one. She looked first to the right, then to the left, but nobody was at hand to help her, not even Mademoiselle Juliani to echo her asseverations; and there was Mr. Annesley, sitting immoveably opposite to her, awaiting her reply with his eyes fixed on her face. It was very embarrassing—very

annoying. With the usual anxiety of a weak mind to procrastinate a decision, her whole idea was to gain time; and to this she bent all her efforts.

"What you say is all very reasonable, very just, I dare say, Mr. Annesley,—but, of course, I must have time—time to consider, you know. In a matter so seriously affecting Ellen's happiness, you would not, I am sure, think of hurrying me into a rash decision."

"I certainly do not wish to hurry you; but I cannot conceive that there should be much occasion to consider a matter which was settled six months ago."

"Not settled, Mr. Annesley, not quite settled. I only gave my consent conditionally, you know."

Mr. Annesley, with infinite patience, went over again all his former arguments, to prove that the condition was useless.

"Yes,—very true, very possible. I dare say,—indeed, I do not doubt—that your income is sufficient to maintain my daughter respectably. But Ellen, of course, has a right to look beyond respectability; and I, as a mother, have naturally some ambition for her. Ellen was very young when she engaged herself; circumstances have changed since then,—might change so as to make it necessary for me to retract my consent."

"I cannot imagine any change of circumstances which could create such a necessity, unless you should discover anything in me, proving me unworthy of being trusted with your daughter's happiness."

"Oh, I did not mean that, of course. I have the highest respect for you, and your family. But

I must have time,—I cannot be hurried,—I really must have time to consider.”

“But when may I hope for a decisive answer; to-morrow?”

“Oh, no! next day—or next week, perhaps, certainly some time before I go to town,—I must have time,—it makes me ill to be hurried. Indeed, this conversation has already flurried me a good deal. Pray be so good as to ring the bell, Mr. Annesley; I cannot conceive why Mademoiselle Juliani has left me so long,—I am really not strong enough to go through such scenes,—and to be so hurried.”

There was no more to be obtained from her ladyship this day; she had retrenched herself within the stronghold of ill-health, and she was not to be driven from it. Edward was obliged to take his leave, and went to seek Ellen, to report to her the unfavourable issue of the conference.

Lady Ethelwode rejoiced in having so successfully put off the evil day; but still there was the necessity of coming to a decision, sooner or later, hanging over her head; and nothing could be more uncomfortable. Ellen would, of course, add her persuasions to Edward's, and she felt she should never be able to withstand their united force. It was dreadful to be so persecuted; but what was to be done? At length, in despair, she resolved to speak to Lord Ethelwode about it. He never seemed to have any trouble in coming to a decision, or in keeping to it when made, and he might help her.

Accordingly, she took the first opportunity of relating to her husband what had passed, and added, that she really could not go through such perse-

cution, and that, unless he took the matter in hand, she must give it up, and let Ellen do as she pleased. Lord Ethelwode's first words proved that she had been quite right in thinking that he would have no trouble in coming to a decision.

"I think you have acted perfectly right," said he (Lady Ethelwode opened her eyes in astonishment, for, during the thirteen years she had been married, she never remembered his saying she was right in any thing before;) "but as, of course, Annesley will not be satisfied with your answer, the only way to settle the matter is to go up to town at once. I will give the necessary orders directly, and we can start next Thursday. It will be very convenient to me, in many ways, to be in town early this year."

Poor Lady Ethelwode! This was indeed escaping from Scylla to fall into Charybdis. She protested that it was quite impossible for her to move so soon, that the hurry would kill her, that she would rather that Mr. Annesley should marry Ellen — indeed, she thought now it would be rather a good thing, and then she need not go to town at all; any thing was better than going through the dreadful fatigue of such a hurried journey. But, as she had herself foreseen, Lord Ethelwode had as little difficulty in keeping to a resolution as in forming one: he was now immoveable, and, notwithstanding all his wife's entreaties, and her assurances of her determination to die, if he persisted in such a dreadful scheme, Thursday was irrevocably fixed for the day of their departure; and he left the room to give the necessary orders, just as her ladyship was preparing to prove the impossibility of her enduring such fatigue, by going into a fit of hysterics.

CHAPTER X.

“ Farewell !—

• • • • •
"Twere vain to speak, to weep, to sigh;
Oh! more than tears of blood can tell,
When wrung from guilt's expiring eye,
Are in that word—Farewell !—Farewell !”

BYRON.

Lord Caldwell heard, with exultation, of Lord Ethelwode's sudden determination. He felt no doubt of his ultimate success with Ellen; if she were once removed entirely from Annesley's counteracting influence, and in London, every thing would favour him. She would there learn the value of rank and wealth in the eyes of the world; she would daily witness the superiority of his position; she would see him distinguished, courted, sought after by the highest in the land; and she would then know how to appreciate his homage. Her eyes would, moreover, be opened to the sacrifices she must make in marrying a poor curate; and she would soon forget, in the brilliant triumphs the world would offer her, the romantic love which she now thought more precious than them all.

Nothing of these thoughts, however, appeared in his manner, when he called at the castle to take leave of Miss Percival and her mother. He pitied Lady Ethelwode for her dreadful exertions as much

as she could wish, and showed towards Ellen such delicate and friendly sympathy, that certain vague suspicions which had been floating in her mind, of his being, in some way, concerned in this sudden departure, were entirely dissipated; and she reproached herself for ever having entertained a thought against one who evidently felt so kindly for her; so much more kindly than any one in her own family.

Louisa Conway hastened over to the castle as soon she heard the news of the Ethelwodes' approaching departure. She felt that at such a time Ellen would need all the comfort a friend could give. The two girls had seen less of each other than usual since the ball. Ellen had been fully occupied with the untoward vicissitudes in the course of her love, which had hitherto run so smooth, and she had had neither time nor thoughts to spare to her friend. Louisa, on her side, had been engrossed by her own feelings. St. John's absence had left a blank in her existence; and it required all her strength and energy of mind to battle against the heavy depression which naturally followed the excitement in which she had lately lived, and the daily increasing anxiety with which she looked forward to tidings from him, which never came.

For her own sake, and still more for her father's, she felt it necessary to bear up against her sorrow, the first sorrow of her life; and she applied herself, with characteristic energy, to the studies and pursuits she had abandoned for a time—that delicious time of daily intercourse with *him*—and resolutely strove to overcome, by incessant occupation, the sense of weariness, of aching void, which weighed upon her mind. She could not speak of

what she felt: she must struggle, as woman ever struggles, in silence and alone; and it was better not to see Ellen, than to be with her and to feel that her heart must be closed to her; that in all their intimate, sisterly intercourse, she would be obliged to keep watch over her secret; and that the one subject of which her heart and thoughts were full, could not be touched upon. Now, however, her own feelings were forgotten in her sympathy for her friend; and she assumed the task of a comforter, as if she herself had not stood almost as much in need of the consolation she administered.

It was a difficult task to administer any consolation to Ellen. As usual, she could not look forward; she saw only the present, and the present was wretched.

"Oh! Louisa," she exclaimed, "I almost wish now that I had never loved—that I were still like you—free in heart, free from this wearying anxiety and sorrow!"

"And would you," said Louisa, "renounce the blessing of loving—of feeling yourself beloved, because with its deep joy it brings also a passing sorrow? Would you return to the dim, half-developed existence of one who has never loved, rather than endure the suffering which is the earnest of our having entered the realities of life, of our course having truly begun? Surely such suffering, were it ten times greater, is better than all the careless, unthinking light-heartedness which Love takes from us?"

"Oh! Louisa, you are no judge of the suffering—you cannot know what it is to endure."

Louisa was silent—she was thinking how gladly

she would exchange her own sorrow for Ellen's. Surely it must be easy to bear, with the assurance that it was shared by him she loved—that she could rest in perfect confidence on his affection.

“Louisa!” exclaimed Ellen, suddenly looking up to her friend's face. “Then I was right at first—I thought I was; but your mamma deceived me, and you have been suffering all this while!—suffering even more than I have! Oh! how differently, how much more nobly have you borne it!”

“Do not speak so, dearest Ellen. We cannot judge of each other's burdens, nor how easy or how difficult it is to each to bear them. The heart alone knows its own trials and its own strength. There is no use in making comparisons. Now do not think any more of me. I came to comfort and help you, not to speak of myself. I have enough and too much of self when I am alone.”

Ellen's respect for Louisa's feelings prevented her attempting to press her any further on the subject; but, notwithstanding her saying that it was of no use making comparisons, she felt that all her words of comfort had not done so much to strengthen her as the thoughts of Louisa's self-command and noble endurance of the same, or even heavier sorrow than that which she had allowed, without an effort or a struggle, to weigh down her heart and mind to the ground.

It was only for a time, however, that this strengthening influence lasted; all her weakness, all her hopeless despondency returned the next morning with the thought that this was the last day she was to spend with Edward. It was one of those mild, bright days of early spring, so tantalizing with their deceptive promise, and Edward came early to fetch

Ellen to take their last walk by the sea-shore. She was so struck down by her sorrow, that she walked by his side like one stunned and bewildered. Edward was silent too, for he felt that just then he should make but a sorry comforter. It was not till they had passed the last fisherman's hut of the straggling village that Ellen broke the silence by exclaiming,

"And is it possible that this is really our last walk together—our *last*! Oh! surely it must be a dream!—we shall wake and find it all a wretched dream!"

Edward shook his head mournfully.

"I knew it would be so—I always dreaded this," continued Ellen, passionately, "from the moment our marriage was delayed. It was too much happiness to last, and I always dreaded that something should come between us and destroy it—and now it is all over!"

"No, no, do not say so, dearest. Our happiness is only delayed, not destroyed. Look at the buds on this thorn; by the time they are fully opened out into leaves, we shall again stand here together, please God, as happy—ay, happier than we ever have been—happier for what we suffer now."

"Ah, Edward! I cannot hope and look forward as you do. I feel as if we should never meet again as we have done; it seems to me that every body and every thing is against us."

"And even if they were, how can they injure us whilst we are true to each other? So long as we rest on each other in perfect confidence, and let no doubt, or fear, or misrepresentation come between us to shake our trust, what can prevail against us? Suffer we may—but we shall suffer in hope, knowing that there is no obstacle which can long with-

stand the power of Love and Faith. Let us but trust in each other, my beloved, with unfailing, fearless trust—trust worthy such love as ours—and we may cast from us every fear.”

Whilst Ellen listened to these words, and looked on Edward's countenance, so eloquent with love and truthfulness, she believed, and said that no doubt could ever darken her faith in him—that no combination of persons or circumstances could shake her trust. For the time, his lofty hopefulness imparted itself to her weaker nature, and, as they proceeded onwards, she could listen calmly, even cheerfully, as he spoke of the future; she could look beyond the gloomy present, and feel that there was still a bright future before them.

The sun was setting on the sea as they turned their steps homewards. They stopped to watch it as it sank slowly and majestically below the waters, and they agreed, as so many in the same circumstances have agreed before, to watch the sun set every evening during their separation, that at that hour they might know with certainty that the thoughts of each were present with the other.

They walked very slowly homewards, lingering near each well-known object, trying to spin out to the utmost every moment still left to them. Some touch of compassion had induced Lord Ethelwode to ask Edward to dine at the castle that day, and they had, therefore, the whole evening to be together. Who does not know the feelings of a last evening!—how it is so silent, because the voice cannot articulate the one thought swelling in the heart!—how every chime of the clock thrills through the whole being, as a warning that the dreaded hour is so much the nearer!—with what sad intentness we

gaze on the face we love, as if to engrave each look, each passing expression in our memory, to ponder upon when we can behold that face no more!—how we gloat, as it were, on each minute still left to us, in fear lest we should not use them to the very utmost!

So passed this evening to Edward and Ellen; and when they were forced to part for the night, Edward took up his old station beneath Ellen's window, and watched for hours the glimmering light which told of her presence in the chamber, and of her still being near him.

By the time that she was up and ready to leave her room on the morrow, he was already at her door. But there was no peace or quiet converse to be had in the house that morning. All was bustle, and confusion, and discomfort; servants were hurrying to and fro through every room; Lady Ethelwode was out of humour at being forced to rise so early; she was sure that she never could bear the journey, that every thing she wanted would be left behind; and every minute she sent for Ellen or Mademoiselle Juliani to fetch something or other, for her to give directions to somebody who would get on all the better for being left undirected.

It was with difficulty that, after the hurried and uncomfortable breakfast, Edward and Ellen found a moment to escape into her sitting room, the farthest removed from the scene of confusion. Its usual cheerful aspect was sadly changed; the books, and harp, and piano-forte, were all packed up, and the room looked empty and desolate. Ellen sank down on a chair, overpowered, and the words of hope and comfort died away on Edward's lips. At that moment he could not feel that this was to be but a short separation; for the first time, a

fear, a presentiment of evil, weighed down his usual hopefulness, and he stood in silence beside her, with difficulty controlling his own overpowering emotion, whilst he witnessed hers.

They had not been there long, when the shrill voice of Lady Ethelwode's maid was heard calling for Miss Percival.

"Oh, there you are, Miss Percival!" exclaimed she, bursting into the room. "The carriage is at the door, ma'am, and my lady and mademoiselle is in, and my lord is in a great hurry, and begs you will come directly."

Ellen started up. Edward caught her in his arms, and strained her to his heart.

"God bless you! God for ever bless you, my love, let what will betide!" murmured he, pressing one long fervent kiss on her cold forehead; then, gently drawing her arm within his own, he led, or rather supported her, for she was scarcely able to stand, through the long range of apartments to the hall, where Lord Ethelwode had been pacing to and fro, for the last few minutes, in indignation at being kept waiting.

The angry words died away upon his lips, when he saw Ellen's death-like countenance, and he silently made way for Edward to assist her into the carriage. He jumped in after her, the door was closed, and Ellen sank back in the corner.

"Good heavens, she is fainting!" exclaimed Lady Ethelwode.

Edward caught the words and sprang forward; but the postillions had heard Lord Ethelwode's impatient "All's right," and the carriage rolled rapidly on;—the next moment it passed over the drawbridge, and was out of sight.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Days after days, unvarying, come and go.”
Curse of Kehama.

“ That I might sleep out this great gap of time.”
Antony and Cleopatra.

It was night when the travellers reached London. Ellen had not been in any town larger than H—— since she was quite a child; and, wearied as she was in body and spirits, she sat up from the corner of the carriage, in which she had been silently reclining the whole of the day, and looked out with curious gaze as they rolled rapidly over the stones. The brilliantly lighted streets, the gorgeous shops, the crowds of people passing to and fro, the streams of carts, carriages, and coaches, the ceaseless and confused noises, the life and activity stirring every where, were strange and almost bewildering to her senses, accustomed to the stillness of a country village. A sensation of fear and loneliness came over her. Used, as she was, to find in every passer by a friendly, or, at least, a familiar face, she shrank from that endless crowd of strangers. She threw herself back into her dark corner, and did not look out again till the carriage reached Piccadilly, and drove through a massive portal into the courtyard of Ethelwode house.

The first aspect of the house was not calculated to diminish her gloomy feelings. The notice of the family's arrival had been so short, that it was with difficulty the spacious mansion, uninhabited for many years, except for a short period every session by Lord Ethelwode alone, could be got into any thing like a fit state for their reception. The housekeeper met them at the door, with a thousand apologies on the score of want of time; and the whole party, cold and tired, followed her in silence up the grand staircase, which looked gloomy enough, with its dark panelling of old family pictures, by the flickering light of her solitary candle.

They were cheered a little by the sight of the blazing fire in the drawing-room; but Ellen could not help sorrowfully contrasting its cold, uninhabited look, with that of the comfortable home-like apartments at the castle. Lady Ethelwode sank down, shivering, into an arm-chair by the fireside.

"Thank heavens, we are arrived at last! I thought I never should have got through the journey. Mademoiselle Juliani, pray, get me some tea immediately. I am absolutely dead with fatigue. What a strange idea it was of yours, Lord Ethelwode, to make us come up in this hurry; nothing ready, every thing looking so cold and comfortless!"

"You will be comfortable enough in a day or two," answered his lordship, unconcernedly.

"I am sure I shall never be comfortable in this dingy, gloomy place. This room is an absolute barn."

"The room which every Baron and Baroness of Ethelwode, for the last three hundred years, have

thought comfortable enough for them, might, I should think, be sufficiently so for you; at all events, as you must live here, you had better learn to think so."

Lady Ethelwode shrugged her shoulders, at what she considered her husband's brutality, but she was silent; she was well aware that, with him, complaining was useless.

Ellen was glad when their comfortless dinner was over, and her mother declared that she could sit up no longer. It was an inexpressible relief to escape into the quiet and solitude of her own room, and feel herself freed from the constraint which the presence of others had put upon her feelings the whole day. But her room looked strange and desolate, and she was too much worn out even to enjoy the luxury of unrestrained sorrow. Weary and dejected, she threw herself hastily into bed, inwardly wishing, as she turned away from the light, that she could sleep through all those long, dreary months which must elapse before she could return to her beloved home.

Fortunately, her exhaustion saved her from a restless night, and before long the sufferings of the day were forgotten in sleep, that best of all blessings vouchsafed by the Almighty to weary, heavy-laden man, the friend of the friendless, with its "clear, dewy heaven of rest," and its "fitful glitterings of cloud-skirted dreams."

When she awoke in the morning, the buoyancy of her nature was in part restored, though a confused sensation of sorrow hung over her, like the recollection of a dreadful dream. The sun was shining brightly into her room, and she sprang up and ran towards the window, to throw it open, ac-

cording to her daily custom ; but she shrank back, as the gloomy wall of the courtyard, above which a long dingy row of slated roofs was alone visible, met her eye. It was a melancholy contrast to the wide prospect of green uplands, and wooded dells, spreading down to the shore, and the illimitable and glorious sea, which she had been used from childhood to look upon from her window. All the events, and the misery of yesterday, came back to her in full force ; she drew the curtain, to shut out the morning sunshine, and lay down again, but not to sleep. The long, weary day had begun, and she must, per force, take up her burden again, which, during the night, she had laid aside and forgotten.

Long and weary, indeed, were the first days of the Ethelwodes' stay in town. They had come up so early, that London was nearly empty ; the few acquaintances that Lady Ethelwode retained after her long absence from the world had not yet arrived ; and, having deplored all the way to town the necessity of receiving and returning visits to which she should be subjected in London, and the fatigue they entailed, she now equally deplored that she had neither visitors nor visits to while away the heavy time. Shopping was the only resource, and day after day did she get into her carriage immediately after luncheon, and spend the whole afternoon lounging from one shop to another, turning over every thing, but seldom sufficiently decided to buy, and hesitating as long over the choice of a cap or a ribbon, as if on her decision depended the happiness of her life ; and Ellen was always obliged to accompany her on these ex-

peditions, because she could not go through the trouble of speaking to "those tiresome shopmen."

Poor Ellen! London seemed to her to grow more hateful every day. The close streets and foggy atmosphere oppressed her; she could not get used to the dirt and the din, and the perpetual whirl of a town; and she pined for the pure air, the open prospect, and, above all, the stillness and freedom of the country. Her only hour of pleasure was when she could escape to her own solitary room at night, and could pour out her long pent-up feelings in writing to Edward, or in the morning, before her mother was up, when she could walk alone in the small garden, whose fresh green was not yet tainted by the smoke and dust.

She religiously kept her promise of watching the sun set, although she could only see the red globe sink behind masses of chimney stacks, and his last beams wasting their glory on dusty windows; it was comparative happiness in her loneliness, to feel at such times that Edward was with her at least in thought, that his eyes were resting on the same object. At that moment she could feel that she was not quite alone in the world, and each day, as the sun went down, she said to herself, "there is one day less between us."

Lord Caldwell had taken care not to follow Ellen to town immediately. He knew that it would be useless to make any attempt to ingratiate himself with Ellen, whilst her grief at her separation from Edward was still so fresh; besides, he wished her to feel in full force the want of society and amusement, that she might be prepared to appreciate the difference which his presence would make.

It was not, therefore, for several weeks after the

arrival of the Ethelwodes, that he made his appearance in Piccadilly, and Ellen's brightening eye, when she saw his card one afternoon, on returning from their daily shopping expedition, sufficiently proved the accuracy of his calculations. Lady Ethelwode was not less glad than her daughter.

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed, "somebody is come to town at last, we shall have somebody to talk to; I have been positively moped to death all this time, and, if it had not been for your sake, Ellen, I should have gone back to Ethelwode at once, but now Lord Caldwell is come, we shall do better. Pray, my dear, sit down, and ask him to dinner immediately."

Ellen obeyed her mother's behest with more alacrity than had been her wont of late. The invitation was quickly despatched, and as quickly accepted, and Lord Caldwell was welcomed on his arrival as warmly as he could wish. The Ethelwodes had been left so long to the uninterrupted dulness of their family circle, that any visiter would have been gladly received, much more Lord Caldwell, whose lively and ever ready conversation was admirably adapted to dispel the ennui of such a party.

He had left the abbey only two days before, and Ellen longed to ask question upon question; but she had not courage to utter them. He guessed her anxiety, and, without waiting for inquiries, spoke of every thing she could wish to know, and she could not help being gratified by the good-nature with which he seemed to have taken pains to acquire the information he thought she would most like to hear.

He did not at first mention Mr. Annesley, and

Ellen was vexed at the omission, yet, when he did mention him, she almost wished that he had continued silent.

"I saw Annesley the day before I came away," he said. "He seemed in excellent spirits, and was, as usual, full of his parish business."

A pang shot through Ellen's heart.

"In excellent spirits," repeated she to herself, "whilst I am pining here."

The next moment she was angry with herself for her momentary doubt, but the feeling recurred, when Lord Caldwell continued:—

"What an admirable parish priest he is! his whole heart and soul seem absorbed in his duties. I do not think he has a thought or a feeling beyond them."

Ellen did not answer, and Lord Caldwell went on to speak of something else. But the sting of his words rankled in her heart all the evening, and although she reproached herself for allowing them to have any weight, she could not shake off the impression.

Next day the Conways arrived in town, and Ellen and Louisa met with heartfelt joy on both sides.

"Now you are come, Louisa," said Ellen, "I shall not hate this odious place quite so much; I shall no longer feel that I am utterly alone. Oh, Louisa, you do not know what this month has been to me!"

"I can guess something of it by your pale face, dear Ellen," said Louisa, affectionately; "we must do something to bring back the colour to your cheeks, before the gay season begins, or you will

falsify all Aunt Frances's predictions concerning your brilliant *débüt*."

"I do not care," replied Ellen, dejectedly, "it is of little consequence how I look."

"But it is of great consequence that you should not lose your health, either of body or mind. Mr. Annesley commissioned me to see that you took care of yourself, so, on the strength of his authority, I shall forthwith enter on my office, by insisting on your putting on your habit and riding with us, instead of shutting yourself up in that close carriage by way of an airing."

Ellen gladly obeyed, and in half an hour they were on their way to the park, where the crowd of carriages and of equestrians showed that the season was really beginning. The gaiety of the scene, the pleasure of being once more on horseback, the freshness of the mild spring air, and the exhilarating feeling of cantering on the turf, raised Ellen's spirits, and by the time they reached the banks of the Serpentine, her complexion had regained all its former brilliancy, and she could talk and laugh with Louisa and Sir Charles Conway, with a lighter heart than she had had since she left Edward.

"By Jove! what a beautiful girl?" exclaimed a gentleman, who with Lord Caldwell and several others was riding in the train of a handsome fashionable-looking woman, as Ellen passed by.

Lord Caldwell, who was talking to the lady, turned round at this exclamation.

"Ah, Miss Percival! The very person we were speaking of, Mrs. Carew."

"Talk of the devil....." said Lord Harry Fleetwood, laughing.

"Talk of an angel rather," exclaimed Sir F-

derick Granville, the gentleman who had first remarked Ellen; "I never saw any thing so heavenly in this lower world of ours."

"But where has this angelic apparition vanished to?" asked Mrs. Carew, looking round; "my head was turned the other way when she passed, and I did not see her."

"Here she is," said Lord Caldwell, "coming this way again with Sir Charles and Miss Conway. I must go and pay my respects to them."

"Stop. Do tell me before you go, is that the Miss Conway whose fair self, or fairer *cassette*, Arthur St. John has been laying siege to in some out of the way country place?"

"The same; and if his father had not chosen to die when he did, I suspect he would have won the prize by this time."

"What a *manque de tact* in the father!" said Mrs. Carew; "especially as he left no money to make up for the blunder. But I must get introduced to these people; I have the greatest curiosity to know the person who has made a gay Benedict like Arthur St. John abjure his vows against the holy state of matrimony, and I am dying to see this peerless Miss Percival. Lord Caldwell, you must introduce me."

His lordship had no time to answer, for the Conways and Ellen were now close to them. Both parties of equestrians stopped as Lord Caldwell rode up to Ellen and her companions; for Mrs. Carew, bent on accomplishing an introduction, would not pass on, and the gentlemen with her were glad of the opportunity of obtaining so good a view of Ellen's beautiful face.

"Mrs. Carew is very anxious to know you, Miss

Conway," said Lord Caldwell, after the first greetings were over; "will you allow me to introduce you to each other? She is an old friend of St. John's," he added, in a lower voice.

Louisa coloured as she gave her assent, and she looked at Mrs. Carew with quite as much interest as that lady had expressed about her. The introduction over, the two parties joined, and proceeded together. Mrs. Carew entered into conversation with Sir Charles and his daughter, and Lord Caldwell took his place beside Ellen.

"I am glad to see you looking so much better than you did last night," he said; "and I hope I shall see you to-morrow at Lady Cardale's, outshining every one, as usual."

"I am not going there," said Ellen, with a slight feeling of mortification; "we do not know her."

"'Tell it not in Gath,'" said Lord Caldwell, laughing; "'not to know her, argues yourself unknown,' which is an unpardonable sin in this London world."

"Your London world is a very hateful one, I think," exclaimed Ellen, pettishly; "I cannot conceive any one liking to live in this perpetual noise and crowd, and, worst of all, a crowd of strangers."

"Ah! so says every young lady at the beginning of her first season; but do not condemn poor London without a fair trial. I assure you, when you get used to its ways, and know and are known to every body, you will recant your present heresy, and agree with me that it is a very tolerable world, after all."

"Unfortunately, I am not likely to have an opportunity of so doing. Mamma has been so long

out of it, that she has lost her place, and she dreads the trouble necessary to regain it; and Lord Ethelwode's acquaintance is confined to a circle of old-fashioned people, whose pedigree is as unsullied as his own."

"Not a very promising prospect for you, certainly," said Lord Caldwell, with a smile; "but I am much mistaken if it does not prove brighter than you expect. At all events, take my advice, and desire your maid to prepare your ball-dress against to-morrow night; for I have a sort of presentiment that I shall meet you at Lady Cardale's."

Ellen laughed at the idea of such a thing, but she could not help wishing that there were a possibility of Lord Caldwell's presentiment proving true. This wish increased as Mrs. Carew, who had heard Lord Caldwell's last words, turned round and said,

"Are you speaking of Lady Cardale's ball? One really hears of nothing else. I am told it is to be the most magnificent affair of the season—temporary rooms, transparencies, and Heaven knows what. Every body is to be there. I suppose you are going, Miss Conway?"

Ellen was glad the question was not addressed to her. For the first time, she felt that it was a sort of disgrace not to be going where every body was going, and she involuntarily envied Louisa when she answered—

"We have cards, but I am not sure whether we shall go."

Mrs. Carew looked at her in astonishment. A young lady in her first season, calmly hesitating whether or not she would go to the most brilliant ball in London, showed a degree of philosophy or

inanity which was beyond her comprehension ; and she expressed her feeling by a look at Lord Caldwell, accompanied by an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders.

Louisa did not perceive the effect of her words, which to her seemed simple enough. Her mind was painfully occupied in revolving Lord Caldwell's assertion, that Mrs. Carew was a great friend of St. John's. There was something in that lady's tone and manner which, even during their short conversation, had struck her unpleasantly, and she felt unwilling to believe that she could really be *his* friend. The very tone of familiar acquaintance in which she spoke of him was displeasing to her, and once or twice she made allusions which brought the proud blood to Louisa's cheek, and startled her with the fear that Mr. St. John might have made Mrs. Carew the *confidante*, not only of his own feelings, but of what he might suppose to be hers. This thought threw additional restraint over her manner, cold as it always was to strangers ; and Mrs. Carew, foiled in her attempts at discovering what her real feelings were with regard to St. John, and angry at being baffled by a mere country girl, turned away from her, and gave her whole attention to Ellen, till they reached Grosvenor Gate, where the parties separated.

"Well," said Lord Caldwell, as soon as the Conways were out of hearing, "what do you think of our friend's choice?"

"I think I never saw such a pattern of starched, disagreeable prudery in my life. I should just as soon have thought of Arthur St. John making love to his grandmother's court dress, as to such a piece of animated buckram."

"You are severe," said Lord Caldwell, laughing, "but I suspected as much. I would advise you, however, to be more cautious when you speak of her before St. John. I once ventured to hint that I did not think her quite perfection, and he nearly called me out."

"Ridiculous! to *afficher une grande passion* for a Dutch doll like that; if it had been Miss Percival, *à la bonne heure*."

"Much obliged to you," said Lord Caldwell; "but I am as well satisfied that things should remain as they are. I have enough to do with one rival, without encountering a second. By the way, I am already going to claim your services as my ally. I hope you have not forgotten your promise?"

"Oh, no, no! I rather enjoy the thoughts of helping you to tame this beautiful little rustic. I do not suppose it will be a very difficult matter. But what do you want me to do?"

"Simply this: she would like to go to Lady Cardale's to-morrow, and I have hinted that I will manage the business for her; Lady Cardale will send her an invitation immediately if I ask her to do so; but as she does not know a soul in town, poor Ellen will not be able to go after all, unless you will be charitable enough to *chaperon* her."

"I shall be charmed," said Mrs. Carew, rejoicing in the thoughts of the splendour which Ellen's *début* would throw over her declining reign in the world of fashion. "But will Lady Ethelwode trust her daughter with a perfect stranger?"

"She would trust her with the Great Mogul, if it would save her the trouble of taking care of her herself."

"In that case, I am at her service."

"Thank you; then I will go at once and make my suit to Lady Cardale. *Au revoir.*"

Ellen was sitting that evening at her work-frame, in the gloomy drawing-room in Piccadilly, listening rather sadly to the rolling of the numerous carriages which were conveying the inhabitants of that aristocratic quarter to the gay circles from whence she was excluded, when the servant entered, and put a note from Lord Caldwell into her hand. She started with astonishment when, on opening it, a card of invitation to Lady Cardale's ball met her eye. The note stated that Lord Caldwell had much pleasure in sending the inclosed card to Miss Percival, and that he hoped she would now believe that he was no false prophet. He added, that in case she should be unable to find any one to go with her on such short notice, Mrs. Carew would be delighted to take upon herself the office of *chaperon*, and would call next day to make the necessary arrangements with Miss Percival.

"How very kind!—how very good-natured of Lord Caldwell!" exclaimed Ellen.

"What are you saying about Lord Caldwell?" asked her mother, waking out of a doze, in which she had been indulging since dinner.

Ellen explained the matter; and, as Lord Caldwell had foreseen, her mother at once declared that she had no objection to Ellen's going with any one who would take charge of her. Mrs. Carew must of course be a fit person to be her *chaperon*, or Lord Caldwell would not have introduced her.

Ellen herself shrank at first from the thoughts of appearing in public for the first time with a perfect stranger; she would have much preferred

accompanying the Conways, but Louisa had said that they had not decided on going; and she was too delighted with the prospect of being at Lady Cardale's wished-for ball, to think long of any thing else.

The next day, therefore, when she met Mrs. Carew in the park, there was nothing to be done but to settle the hour at which the latter should call for her.

"We must be early," said she, "for I wish to introduce you to Lady Cardale."

Ellen promised to be ready; and after she returned home, she sat for some time, wondering what could make Louisa think such a handsome, fascinating woman disagreeable. That evening, as she watched the sun going down, she did not, as usual, wish herself at Ethelwode.

CHAPTER XII.

“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.”

“The Conways are come to town, mamma,” said Fanny Montague, as her mother and sister came in that day from their drive; “I have just got a note from Louisa.”

“Then I was right, you see, mamma,” exclaimed Minna, “and it was Sir Charles and Louisa we saw riding in the park; I thought I could not mistake her. It was rather amusing to see her with Mrs. Carew; she seems to have been in a great hurry to make the acquaintance.”

“Why should it be particularly amusing to see Louisa with Mrs. Carew?” asked Fanny, who was not so much *au fait* of the *chronique scandaleuse* of the day as her sister.

“My dear Fanny, where have you been living these two years, not to have heard of Mrs. Carew’s flirtation with Mr. St. John. She is furious at the report of his engagement to Louisa, naturally concluding, I suppose, that his wife will not much approve of such an intimacy.”

“My dear child,” said Lady Frances, “I really wish you would not make such remarks. You should remember never to repeat scandalous *on-dits* of any body who has a certain station in the world, unless the story is so bad and so authenticated

that one is obliged to give them up altogether; it may come round to the ears of the persons spoken of, which would be very awkward, if they have any influence in the world; and it does not look well in a girl to know these things. As to Mrs. Carew, she has a bold manner, certainly, is very dashing, and she has been a good deal talked of with Mr. St. John; but you know, so long as she has one of the best houses in town, and is received everywhere, that is no business of ours."

"None of *ours*, certainly," said Minna, who had listened rather impatiently to her mother's lecture; "but Louisa may think it some of hers; and it is very amusing to see her, with all her prudery, the first thing on her arrival in town, making acquaintance with Mr. St. John's *chère amie*."

"My dear, I always felt sure poor Louisa would lose her absurd notions, as soon as her father would allow her to have a little society, and see what other people do. I must go and see her to-morrow, poor child, for, unless I look after her, I am afraid she will go out the same sort of figure she did at Oaklands, which would be exceedingly unpleasant for us."

"Then I will go with you," said Minna; "I am curious to see the effect of our London climate on my starched cousin, and I am dying to know what she thinks of Mr. St. John's long absence, and whether there is really any truth in the report of their engagement."

"Did not Mrs. Carew tell you something about him yesterday?" asked Fanny.

"Only that he is still abroad, and likely to remain there some time, as he found his father's affairs in a worse state than he had anticipated."

"Well, my dear Minna, whatever you do," said Lady Frances, as the ladies separated to dress for the evening's gaiety, "take care not to say any thing of your cousin in society; it does one no good in the world, depend upon it, to cry down one's own relations, and it does not look well."

This was the alpha and omega of Lady Frances's morality. Whatever did not look well must necessarily be wrong;—whatever wore a fair appearance in the world's opinion, must as necessarily be right. It was a simple and compendious rule, both easy and convenient of application; and her ladyship adhered to it, with a consistency and steadiness worthy of imitation by many who profess a much higher standard of action.

The next day, Lady Frances and her daughters went, as they had proposed, to see Louisa. The latter would gladly have avoided the visit, but there was no possibility of excluding such near relations, and accordingly they were ushered into the room where she was sitting with her father, and as usual busily occupied.

Lady Frances was affectionate and devoted as ever. Her first endeavour was to impress on Louisa the impossibility of her conducting herself properly in the new sphere she was entering, without the assistance of her advice and experience. Louisa, however, could not be brought to see this, so her aunt proceeded to lament that she could not offer to *chaperon* her, as, of course, she would wish to do. She knew Sir Charles would prefer his daughter to go out with her mother's sister, rather than with any one else, and she was distressed beyond measure that it was out of her power; but she had not health for any more exer-

tion than she was forced to make for her own girls, and "dear Montague" had positively forbidden her taxing her strength any further. She hoped dear Louisa would have no difficulty in finding some other *chaperon*; it would grieve her dreadfully to think that she would be deprived of any pleasure on her account.

"Pray do not trouble yourself about it, my dear Lady Frances," said Sir Charles; "my cousin, Lady Catherine St. John, promised long ago to *chaperon* Louisa when she came out."

"Ah, Lady Catherine St. John," said Lady Frances, in a tone which, in spite of herself, revealed her mortification, for Lady Catherine was a privileged member of those high circles into which Lady Frances, with all her labour and manœuvring, only obtained occasional and uncertain entrance.

"Mr. St. John's aunt, eh, Louisa?" said Minna, in a low voice.

"Yes," said Louisa, aloud, but colouring, in spite of herself.

Lady Frances next deplored her inability to exert herself to procure invitations for her niece.

"You know, my dear Louisa, how anxious I naturally am to do all I can for you; but, of course, my duty to my own children must be my first object, and, really, dear Montague is so indolent that every thing falls upon me; besides, people are so exclusive now, I could scarcely venture to ask for invitations for you; they might be affronted, and not invite *us* another time; but I really am terribly vexed at not being able to be of more use to you."

Here again Lady Frances found her vexation quite unnecessary. Lady Catherine St. John had

already sent Louisa invitations for two balls, and was to take her to a private concert the next night. Lady Frances tried to look pleased, and begged to see the invitations, and hoped they were good, as, between themselves, Lady Catherine was rather odd, and sometimes patronised a curious set. The invitations were accordingly produced; one of them was for Lady Cardale's ball, which Ellen had been so anxious to go to; the other for a ball at D—— House, for which Minna and her mother had been moving heaven and earth to get an invitation, without success.

Minna bit her lips, and Lady Frances gave up the subject of going out, which was too unsatisfactory to be pursued any further, and turned to that of dress. Here she thought she must be on safe ground, and she launched forth fearlessly. She should be happy, she said, to superintend Louisa's toilette, which must, of course, acquire a thorough alteration. She was very anxious that her dear sister's child should make the best appearance possible, that she might not bring discredit on her friends.

"I conclude you have nothing fit to put on, my dear, for such occasions, and, if you like, I will undertake to buy all your things: I shall not mind the fatigue and bore of the thing, for the sake of being useful to you. You know, I am used never to think of myself; if dear Montague were not waiting for the carriage, to go down to the house, I would offer to take you out shopping now; however, as you are so little *au fait* of milliners and mantua-makers, &c., you had better, perhaps, trust it altogether to me."

"Thank you," said Louisa; "but Lady Catherine

rine has already recommended her people to me, and I have put the arrangement of my wardrobe into their hands: I thought this the best way, as it will save trouble and shopping, which I detest."

"Oh, certainly the best way, if your father can afford it; but you will find it very expensive."

Louisa, however, preferred giving money to giving time in such matters; and as Sir Charles did not seem at all alarmed at her extravagance, there was nothing more to be said. It was clear that Lady Frances could not make herself of importance, in any way, to her impracticable brother and niece; and to avoid exposing herself to any further mortification, she took her leave, greatly to Minna's annoyance, before the latter had had time to sound Louisa on the subject of Mr. St. John.

"Will you have the carriage to-day, Loo?" said her father, when they were gone; "I cannot ride with you, but perhaps Ellen Percival will be glad of a drive, if you call for her."

"No; I would rather stay at home to-day, papa. I feel very stupid, and I am afraid I should not be pleasant society to any one."

"That is a bad beginning for your first season, my dear child," said Sir Charles, as he prepared to leave the room.

Louisa turned away from his anxious look, for she felt a tear trembling in her eye at the consciousness of how entirely unfit she was, with her present feelings, to enter into the gay scenes which had just opened to her. She had eagerly looked forward to coming to town, in the hope that there she must hear some tidings of St. John; but now she was come, she felt as if London were one vast wilderness, in the immensity of which it seemed

impossible that the one thing she wished to hear should ever meet her ears. The recollection of Mrs. Carew would also intrude, and, in spite of herself, disturb and irritate her. At Oaklands she had felt simply unhappy when suddenly deprived of St. John's society, and she had looked forward with confidence to the termination of her uncertainty when she came to town. Now that uncertainty seemed greater than ever, and all the future was too vague to allow of any definite hope. There was nothing in the dim waste to cling to, to dwell upon, and her heart was oppressed and weary with its vain struggle to find a resting-place—to grasp something more real than the shadows of its own hopes and fears.

Her father in a great measure shared her anxiety. Although the subject had never been mentioned between them, he was at no loss to read her feelings, and he watched anxiously the progress of the sorrow which for the first time darkened her existence. Nor did it seem strange to him, as perhaps it may to some of our readers, that his child, the open-hearted being he had trained from infancy, and whose mind till that day had been unveiled as her countenance before him, should not seek his assistance in her struggle.

He knew woman's nature too well. He knew that it is woman's lot to suffer in silence, to endure alone conflicts which might shake the strength of the strongest of those who deride her weakness, and that the very act of imploring aid would break down her surest defence—her self-respect. He knew that the secret feelings of a woman's heart would be sacred even in the unrestrained intercourse of sisters—of those who have grown up together—

— of those who have shared the same pillow, and offered up their united prayers to Heaven — when the one finds that there is a sanctuary within the other's heart which even she may not approach.

Thus he watched his child in silence, or lent his aid unasked or indirectly. It was to lighten her anxiety, by obtaining, if possible, more certain tidings of St. John, that he was going out now. He went first to Lady Catherine St. John's, thinking that, as his aunt, she was most likely to have certain accounts of him. She was not at home, however, and Sir Charles proceeded to the Traveller's, which he knew St. John frequented constantly. He could find out nothing there but that Mr. St. John had not been seen there for a long time, and was supposed to be abroad; that a great many notes and letters were waiting for him, but, as he had left no direction, they could not be forwarded. At length the porter managed to recollect the address of the lodging Mr. St. John had occupied when last in town, and thither Sir Charles proceeded.

The lodging was still St. John's, but the people of the house had no idea when he would return. Sometimes they heard that he was gone to see what money could be got from the sale of his father's effects, and to snatch what he could from the creditors; sometimes, that he was keeping out of the way of his own creditors, who had made the place too hot for him; but they could not tell which was the truth. Either story sounded any thing but satisfactory to Sir Charles, and he turned away disappointed, and with an undefined sensation of anxiety and dread. As he thought over all that he had heard, however, this feeling wore off. He

felt that it was beneath him to attach so much weight to the gossiping of servants, or allow it to influence him against a man whom he had once formed a high opinion of. One part of these reports, that about St. John's own debts, was manifestly untrue, for he had seen in the papers, only a few weeks ago, the death of a Miss St. John, a near relation of Arthur's, who had left him all her property; and the rest might be equally unfounded. There might be many reasons for St. John's stay abroad besides dishonourable evasion of his creditors, and circumstances might very possibly be such at present as to prevent his renewing formally his addresses to Louisa. The death of his father, still so recent, might of itself be considered as a sufficient cause for his delay. These reflections set at rest Sir Charles's anxiety, and banished from his mind the uncomfortable feelings which for a moment had found place there.

That mind was one in which trust in human virtue, and indulgence for human frailties, had their source in the charity "which hopeth all things," and "thinketh no evil;" and thus they were unfailing. In the clear mirror of his mild and chastened spirit, the errors of others were ever reflected through the medium of love and reverence for his brother man.

It is a beautiful thing when a man, whose prime of life is past, but whose strength of intellect remains — who has gone through the ordeal of life, its trials, its struggles, and the world's contamination—advances towards old age with an unsuspecting and indulgent mind. How much does it not speak for that man's career, how much for the strength of his faith, which, through all earthly

pollutions, has never doubted the native beauty of God's noblest work—the human soul. That faithful spirit retains in age more than the beauty of youth ; it is as the everlasting foliage of the ever-green oak, spreading luxuriantly in the midst of winter, after having braved the summer heats and the autumn blasts which have stripped every other tree of its early glories.

CHAPTER XIII.

"True love, an thou be true,
Thou hast ane kittle part to play;
For Fortune, Fashion, Fancy, and thou,
Maun strive for many a day."

HENDERSOUN.

Ellen was ready full half an hour before Mrs. Carew's carriage came to the door, although her toilette was performed with all the care and attention so important an affair demanded.

"To be sure, it is a satisfaction to dress such a young lady as mine," thought her maid, as she looked after Ellen, when she left the room. "I'll be bound there won't be a beautifuller one amongst them all to-night."

Lady Ethelwode thought the same thing, although not exactly in the same words, as Ellen came into the drawing-room to wish her good night; and she half regretted that she was not going to accompany her. She would have liked to witness the admiration she must excite; but, the next moment, the recollection of the terrible fatigue she must have gone through, comforted her for the loss.

Mrs. Carew's carriage was announced whilst these thoughts were passing in her mind; and Ellen kissed her mother, and ran lightly down stairs.

"Ready to a moment, I declare," exclaimed Mrs. Carew, as she sprang into the carriage; "I wish all young ladies were as punctual; I hope now we shall get up the great crush."

But no; there was already a double line of carriages at the entrance of Grosvenor Square; and it was long before Mrs. Carew's could reach Lady Cardale's door. Ellen was impatient at the delay, and almost terrified by the crush of carriages; the swearing of coachmen, foiled in their attempts to cut into the line; and the apparently "hair-breadth scapes" from threatening poles and locked wheels. She was scarcely reassured by the sight of the brilliant crowd, which already filled Lady Cardale's magnificent apartments; and she clung, almost trembling, to her *chaperon's* arm, as their names were shouted up the grand staircase. Lord Caldwell had been awaiting their arrival, and immediately joined them. Ellen forgot her fears at the sight of a familiar face, and met him with outstretched hand, and one of her brightest smiles.

"How can I thank you for your kindness in procuring me this pleasure?" said she.

"Pray, do not thank me for being selfish," he answered, pressing her hand; "I assure you, I need no encouragement in that respect. Besides, I shall get thanks enough from others before this night is over. Mrs. Carew, the crowd has opened a little, and there is Lady Cardale by the door. Had you not better push on whilst the coast is clear?"

They proceeded accordingly, and soon reached the spot where Lady Cardale was standing. She received Ellen most graciously, as the *protégée* of Lord Caldwell and Mrs. Carew, both stars of the first magnitude, in the world of fashion. She would

have received her the same under any circumstances; but the first glance satisfied her that Lord Caldwell was right, when he had said that Ellen would undoubtedly, as soon as she was seen, become a pre-eminent star herself; and she was glad that the new meteor should first shine forth in her house. Ellen was gratified by her warmth of manner, and inwardly wondered where was the superciliousness and finery she had heard of so much amongst fashionable people. Her momentary nervousness was now quite over; and the blaze of light, the exciting music, the gay hum of voices, soon raised her spirits to their highest pitch of buoyancy. As she proceeded through the rooms, her countenance radiant with animation, talking and laughing with Lord Caldwell, with the ease and grace of one who felt in her natural element, a murmur of admiration and curiosity followed her steps.

"How beautiful! how lovely! who can she be?" exclaimed group after group, as she passed by.

All who could claim acquaintance with Mrs. Carew or Lord Caldwell, pressed towards them: the women, to get a nearer view of this wondrous apparition; the men, in hopes of obtaining an introduction. Never, in her most palmy days, had Mrs. Carew been so eagerly sought, so brilliantly surrounded; and, although she was well aware that the homage was paid, not to her, but to her temporary charge, she received it with equal gratification. It was better, she thought, to shine in the reflected light of another, than not to shine at all.

"Have you seen the new beauty?" asked Lord Harry Fleetwood, of the Duke of Dainsworth.

"No; who is she? I hear every body talking of her."

"She is a daughter of Lady Ethelwode, and is just come out; they say she will eclipse every woman in London."

"Ah! a daughter of Lady Ethelwode," said old General B——; "I remember her mother was a very handsome woman, as the rich widow, Percival. But, I suppose, as usual, the daughter is not equal to the mother."

"Not equal!" exclaimed Sir Frederic Granville, who had scarcely taken his eyes off Ellen since she entered the room; "then the mother must have been more than divine."

"Is she really so very beautiful?" said his grace, in the tone of indifference of a man who had seen the reigning beauties of fifteen seasons.

"Your grace may judge for yourself," said Sir Frederic, as an opening in the crowd, at that moment, cleared the space between the group of talkers and the spot where Ellen stood, talking to Lord Caldwell and two or three others whom he had introduced.

"She *is* beautiful!" exclaimed the duke, with unusual animation of manner. "Caldwell seems a great friend; I must get him to introduce me."

As Lord Caldwell did not dance himself, he immediately granted the duke's request; and the next moment Ellen's hand was in that of his grace, and he was leading her away to take their places in the quadrille, which was just forming.

As Lord Caldwell had foreseen, Ellen's position in society was now fixed. To have been chosen by the Duke of Dainsworth as his partner for this, the first dance of her first ball, of her first season, was sufficient to ensure her triumph over every competitor, even if her own surpassing beauty had

not put all rivalry out of the question. Ambitious mothers with unmarried daughters looked upon her with envy, and wished she had remained for ever buried in her country seclusion. Daughters, who had themselves been once nine days' wonders, strove, by their extravagant praises of their rival, to hide their mortification at finding themselves so entirely eclipsed. Men of all ranks, and almost of all ages, crowded on her steps, and made more assiduous court to Mrs. Carew and Lord Caldwell, than ever did fawning courtier to despotic sovereign, in hopes of obtaining the favour of an introduction; a favour Lord Caldwell took care should only be conceded to the elect. Never had triumph been more brilliant and more complete.

"The dose is pretty strong," whispered Lord Caldwell to Mrs. Carew, as he watched Ellen's glowing countenance, so different from the pale, dejected look, it had worn only two days ago; "don't you think it will do its work?"

"The work of intoxication, certainly," answered his companion. "But we must not reckon too much on the effect of a single potion. To-morrow she will be sober again, and then will come the effects—head-ache, fatigue, disgust, and recollection of the country curate."

"No, no," said Lord Caldwell, laughing, "that will never do; we must repeat the dose till at least *that* is drowned altogether. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute*; she is fairly launched now; and even at this moment, I suspect, if we could read her inmost heart, we should find that she looks back with less complacency to the obscure parsonage, than she did three hours ago. In two

months, depend upon it, she will look back to it with horror."

Little did Ellen guess the conclusions Lord Caldwell was drawing, as she gave way to the buoyancy of spirit and the sense of enjoyment, which the novelty and brilliancy of the scene, and the consciousness of her own triumph, naturally excited. The weight which had pressed so heavily on her mind during the last month was momentarily removed, and, with the natural elasticity of youth, her spirits rose proportionably high. She was truly, as Mrs. Carew had said, intoxicated, and no sober thought of the past or the future mingled with her enjoyment of the present. As the Duke of Dainsworth was leading her down to supper, she met Lord Caldwell, and thanked him for the pleasure she owed him, with a look so full of warmth and gratitude, that he began to think himself nearer his object than he had hoped, and his cold heart leaped within him, as he repeated to himself—"Gratitude is near akin to love. Yes, there *would* be happiness in being loved by such a creature as that!"

Mrs. Carew took care that Ellen should not endanger her new-won distinction, by remaining to the last. She carried her off, in spite of the clamorous lamentations of half a dozen gentlemen who claimed Ellen's hand for more quadrilles than she could have danced, had she remained there till the next night. The Duke of Dainsworth himself gave her his arm to lead her down stairs, and, to the astonishment of all those who knew him, actually ran for her shawl, and carefully assisted Lord Caldwell in wrapping it round her. More than one heavy bet was made at that moment, on Ellen's

chance of becoming a duchess before the season was over, and Lord Caldwell secretly resolved that his grace should have no more opportunities than he could help, of dazzling Ellen with visions of strawberry leaves, which might eclipse his own viscount's coronet, and fortune of twenty thousand pounds, "paid quarterly!"

Meanwhile, Ellen, happily "fancy free" of strawberry leaves and viscounts' coronets, had been safely deposited in Piccadilly, and was reluctantly taking off her ball-room attire, her ears still ringing with the adulation which had been incessantly poured into them during the last four hours, and her mind yet excited by the brilliant scene she had quitted. She stood a moment at her glass before she undressed, and could not refrain from a feeling of exultation, as she gazed on the reflection of her face and figure. As she turned from it, her eye fell upon an unfinished letter to Edward, which she had begun two days ago, and it struck her with an undefined but painful feeling.

"I will finish it to-morrow," said she to herself; "I am too tired to-night;" and she hastily undressed and lay down to rest.

For the first time the thought of Edward was unwelcome, and she was glad to take refuge from it in sleep.

Ellen rose the next morning, as Mrs. Carew had prophesied, with an aching head, and weary limbs, the usual penalty of the novice in dissipation. The excitement of the night was over, and every thing else seemed stale and flat after that intoxicating draught. It was in this sobered and saddened mood that she sat down to complete her letter to Edward.

"This letter should have reached you yesterday," she wrote to him, "but I was prevented finishing it by the necessary preparations for that important affair, my first ball in London, to which I went last night. It was at Lady Cardale's, and its splendour even surpassed my expectations. As I was a total stranger to the mistress of the house and all her guests, I did not anticipate much enjoyment, and went rather from curiosity than any other motive. But, thanks to Lord Caldwell, whom I met there, and to my *chaperon*, Mrs. Carew, who, by the way, is a great friend of his, I had more partners than I could dance with, and really spent a very pleasant evening—an event which, since we parted, has become a rare novelty to me. But, believe me, dear Edward, this glimpse of the great world has only made me feel, more strongly than I did before, that I am not fitted to live in it. This morning I am weary in body and mind. What would I not give at this moment to fly away from London and its noise, its crowds, its gaieties, and be once more at your side, wandering along our quiet green lanes, which must be now so beautiful with all the spring flowers and the young leaves, or to be standing with you on the beach, the fresh sea-air blowing on my hot, aching forehead! Oh, for one such hour with you, I would gladly give all the pleasures that London can afford!"

Ellen wrote what she felt. She could not, perhaps, have written those words with equal truth a few hours later, when cantering in the park, escorted by a numerous train of her last night's partners, whose admiration of her graceful horsemanship was as great and as plainly expressed as it had been of her beauty, and her dancing, the night before.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Call ye the city gay ? Its revels joyous ?
They may be so to you ; for ye are young
(Belike) and happy. She is young in years,
But often in mid spring will blighting winds
Do autumn’s work : and there is pain of heart
That doth the work of time : can cloud the brow,
And pale the cheek, and sober down the spirits.”
Old Play.

Louisa’s feelings and anticipations in coming to London had been very different from Ellen’s ; and more different still was the effect which that world she had so eagerly anticipated, from an indefinite belief that there she must hear of, meet St. John—that there her weary uncertainty would come to an end—produced on her mind. The world had no homage to lay at *her* feet ; it offered to her no intoxicating draught of flattery to win her from the sad thoughts which gradually weighed more heavily upon her, as day after day wore on, and still no tidings of St. John came to relieve her anxiety.

There was no gladness to her in the brilliant scenes of pleasure where his presence was wanting—the gay hum of voices seemed discordant, since the one voice which spoke to her heart was not heard amongst them. Nor was this suspense, this aching of the spirit, occasioned by long watching for something to fill up the blank around, the suffering Louisa had now to endure.]

could hear no certain tidings of St. John's present proceedings, rumours of the past reached her ears, which caused many a pang, bitterer far than mere sorrow at his absence could inflict. Light sayings, spoken in a lighter tone by those who boasted of his intimacy, whilst she felt that their friendship would be contamination—sentiments avowed by *his* world, but from which her pure mind revolted—in short, a general looseness of character, a low tone of feeling, evidenced by numberless little things which were repeated in her hearing as good stories, piquant sayings of the clever, brilliant man of fashion, and which she long tried to persuade herself were the mere attempts of the insignificant people who uttered them to reduce a superior being to their own mean level; tales of debts unpaid, of friends deserted when the world looked coldly upon them, of flirtations heartlessly begun and as heartlessly broken off—tales which she hated herself for listening to, and yet to which she could not be deaf, sank with a withering effect into her heart.

Still she hoped and longed the more eagerly for his return, trusting, with the faith of a noble heart, that his loved presence must disperse the gathering clouds, and restore her to the confidence in him, in his truth, that she pined for as the weary pilgrim pines for rest.

Many of the things she heard, and which gave her most pain, were said by Mrs. Carew; and her dislike to this lady added to her incredulity. She could not believe that Arthur St. John was really the friend of such a woman, and she longed impatiently for the day when she might see him prove by his manner that her assumption of inti-

macy with him was, in truth, the impertinent falsehood she was willing to think it.

Mrs. Carew returned this dislike in full, and she would have treated her with true fine-lady insolence if she had been able, but there was something in the cold dignity of Louisa's manner which utterly precluded such a mode of expressing her feelings, and she was obliged to content herself with annoying her, on every possible occasion, by her allusions to St. John, and to postpone any other attempt at mortifying her until his return.

She had full opportunity of gratifying her malice at a ball, where she met Louisa and Ellen, who had both come under Lord Ethelwode's chaperonage. Notwithstanding her passing disgust after Lady Cardale's ball, Ellen had looked forward to this with joyous elation, and, in the fulness of her glee, when her toilette was completed, she could not refrain from waltzing a few steps before the large mirror, which reflected her figure at full length.

Very differently did Louisa prepare for the same ball. Weary and heavy at heart, she allowed her maid to dress her as she chose, and was too much pre-occupied even to remark how little her pale, thoughtful countenance was suited to the brilliant scene which awaited her. Lady Catherine St. John's carriage, stopping at the door, roused her from her reverie, and she hastened down stairs to wish her father good-night and join her *chaperon*.

The rooms were already crowded when they arrived. Louisa was soon engaged, and, when her partner had led her through the press, and they had taken their place in the crowded quadrants, she found herself opposite to Ellen, who, by her beauty and animation, was laughing

with Sir Frederic Granville. Lord Caldwell was standing at a little distance, watching the effects of the temptation to which he had been so active in exposing his intended victim. On perceiving Louisa, he came up to speak to her.

"Do you think," said he, after a remark on Ellen's exceeding loveliness, "that the country curate is in the thoughts of your beautiful friend at such times as these?"

"Surely you cannot suppose that such gay follies could make her forget him? Ellen is light-hearted, but not changeable."

"Well, so be it," said Lord Caldwell, in an incredulous tone—"at all events, you will agree with me, that to have buried such loveliness in the country parsonage would have been high treason to society."

"I am afraid I cannot agree with you even in this. Ellen is certainly made to adorn society, but she would, perhaps, have been as happy, if not happier, in the life she is to lead, if she had never tried the experiment."

"I hope you do not preach such sad sobriety to her," said Lord Caldwell, smiling. "It is showing distrust of your friend, not to allow her to venture where you enter fearlessly yourself."

"I assure you, I need not to be reminded of the difference between Ellen and myself," said Louisa, quietly, showing that she understood the intended sarcasm concealed beneath Lord Caldwell's smooth tone—"but I do *not* distrust her. Even placed as she is, I do not fear for her—as a woman, I could not fear that the triumphs of vanity should loosen the ties of affection. I am not such a traitor to my sex."

It was now Louisa's turn to dance, and the conversation ended. When the quadrille was over, Ellen came to sit by her friend, whom she had not seen for two days, and they were talking quietly together, after having dismissed the crowd of claimants for Miss Percival's hand, when Mrs. Carew and Miss Montague came towards them.

"Is it possible," exclaimed Mrs. Carew, "that two young ladies should be quietly sitting down, whilst one of Weippert's best waltzes is playing!—Miss Percival, I thought you were a devoted waltzer—I have often heard Mr. St. John speak of your waltzing. Can you resist such a temptation?"

"I am tired," said Ellen; "and, besides, I have given up waltzing," added she, blushing; for one of the requests Edward had made to her was, that she would not engage in that dance.

"Such self-denial is really heroic," said Lord Caldwell, who had joined the group—"but it was rather churlish to yourself and the world to have imposed it. It has a savour of almost saintly mortification."

"You are not under such rigid vows, I hope, Miss Conway," said Mrs. Carew; "so pray let me introduce Mr. Levison to you. He is the best waltzer in London, now Arthur St. John is away. I suppose you have often waltzed with *him*. You know it is a favourite opinion of his, that the woman who, in these days, is too prudish to waltz, must either be afraid of standing the test to which it exposes her grace and figure, or have some secret feelings about it very unbecoming any young person. Oh! here is Mr. Levison come just *à-propos*. Now, shall I introduce him?"

"No, it would be useless, as I never waltz," said

Louisa, with a calm voice but a heightened colour and glistening eye, which sufficiently told Mrs. Carew that the aim had taken effect.

"You were speaking of Arthur St. John," said Lord Caldwell. "What can he be doing abroad all this time? He seems to have buried himself as well as his father."

"I had a long letter from him yesterday," said Mrs. Carew; "and he does not write as if he had any intention at present of leaving the land of the living. He seems in excellent spirits, but does not mention any thing about returning home. He is in a very gay place apparently, where a London man is fêted and made much of, like a star at a provincial theatre. I dare say he has managed to provide himself as usual with some quiet flirtation, *pour passer les temps*, which naturally accounts for his being in no hurry to return."

"He seems to have made you his *confidante*," said Lord Caldwell, laughing. "I hope it is nothing serious, however; though it would be amusing to see him caught at last by some colonial Venus."

"There is not much fear of that. Mr. St. John may amuse himself for a time with those who are foolish enough to listen to him, but he will keep carefully aloof from such serious proceedings as might endanger his liberty. He is too well practised at the game to be easily entrapped; and, after all, one cannot wonder at his flirting. What can a poor man do, who is banished from London, and cares neither for shooting, hunting, nor yachting! He must have *some* amusement, you know."

"He is fortunate in having so eloquent and indulgent a pleader," said Lord Caldwell, with his smile, which always resembled a sneer. "I am

glad, however, to hear from such good authority that his absence proceeds from such an agreeable cause. I rather feared, from certain rumours afloat in this good-natured town, that he did not *dare* to return, as he did not think that a Sunday evening walk would be sufficient for his health, and no other time might be convenient."

"Do you mean that his creditors are become so clamorous? It is very likely; duns have a patent for impertinence. But I do not think Arthur St. John is likely to give them much satisfaction."

"I thought somebody had died some time ago, and left him some money. I supposed that would set him all right again."

"I fancy there was not enough for that, even if he had had the inclination to apply it to such a purpose. There were debts of his father's, too, which some people expected him to pay, as if death did not cancel all debts. It was quite ridiculous."

Minna laughed, and then, turning to her cousin, she whispered, "I hope, Louisa, you do not mind all this. I have no doubt he will come back free enough in all respects."

Louisa would have spoken, but there was a choking at her throat which prevented her utterance.

"You seem very warm, Miss Conway," said Mrs. Carew, in a friendly tone, looking at her crimsoned countenance. "Will you come with me into the card-room? It is much cooler there."

"Thank you, but I would rather not lose this seat."

"Then I must leave you, for this corner is oppressively hot." And so saying, she and Minna moved away.

It was some relief to be rid of their presence ; to know that their eyes were no longer fixed on her face, watching, with exulting malice, every change in her countenance ; but a cold weight was on Louisa's heart, numbing all her faculties ; and many minutes after, when Mr. Hope came up to ask her to dance, he had to repeat his request three times before it became intelligible to her. Her first feeling, as she awoke from her painful trance, was joy at perceiving that Ellen was still engaged in lively conversation with the Duke of Dainsworth and one or two others who had collected round her. She had, then, suffered, unobserved, and her pride was spared another wound.

But pride, though a good defence in public, is but a bad comforter in solitude ; and when her ball-dress was cast aside, and with it the mental veil which is so often its appendage, Louisa sank down beneath the weight of the misery she had endured throughout that night. Mrs. Carew's light, careless words, and Minna's sneering laugh, rang in her ears ; and every bright hope, every happy dream of her existence, seemed turned into scoffing fiends at the sound, and to mock her with her own folly in having yielded to them.

When she rose the next morning, after a night of sleepless misery, she was glad, for the first time in her life, to hear that her father had gone out early on business, and that he would not be at home for some hours. She was thus relieved from the fear of having to encounter his affectionate inquiries ; and she gained some hours of solitude, during which she might collect her bewildered thoughts, and try to come to some decision on the subject which was restlessly gnawing at her heart.

She addressed herself to her task with the stern determination of weighing impartially all that she had heard against St. John, and of acting as principle dictated, whatever might be the cost; and none, perhaps, were better fitted than she to fulfil such a resolve. But where is the young heart which can resist the influence of hope? Every word Mrs. Carew had spoken was distinct in her memory, but the arch flatterer whispered that the speaker's own low mind might have coloured the picture she had sketched. The noble qualities which had won her affection might have been concealed from the eyes of the heartless woman of the world, and the worse traits of his character seized upon and exaggerated by her malice. If her security, her trust was shaken, she would not cast it from her altogether; she would not allow the base insinuations of people she despised to prejudice her against one who was absent and unable to justify himself; one who, from her, at least, deserved no blame. Hope whispered that he would return, and that her confidence would be justified by himself; and all other feelings, doubt, fear, anxiety, were all merged in intense longing for that return, which seemed more and more to her to be the crisis of her existence.

CHAPTER XV.

“What letter is this same? What’s here?”

“I’ll be so bold to break the seal for once.”

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Ever since Ellen’s arrival in London, Annesley had been anxiously expecting to hear the result of her first appearance in the world—the impression she would make—the impression that would be made upon her. Her letter satisfied him on these points, written as it was with all her usual frank ingenuousness. There was one thing in it, however, which he did not like—the mention of her being *chaperoned* by a stranger, and that stranger a friend of Lord Caldwell’s.

He could not help recalling the suspicions which the altered conduct of the Ethelwodes, after that nobleman’s introduction into the castle, had aroused in his mind; and he knew enough of his character, to fear that a female friend of his would not be the safest guide in the dangerous paths of fashionable life for one so young, so inexperienced, so impressionable as Ellen—one, too, whose extreme beauty would of itself prove a sufficient peril. He saw that Ellen’s success at the ball, which she attributed to Lord Caldwell and Mrs. Carew, was the natural consequence of her own extraordinary loveliness, and he trembled to think how the subtle poison of the world’s admiration might taint and destroy the sin-

gle-heartedness and purity of mind which had been her greatest charm. Her mother's indolence, and Lord Ethelwode's indifference, left her wholly unprotected. Earnestly did Edward wish that he could be allowed to watch over her, and guide her in her perilous path; but he knew the wish was vain.

Mr. Allen's increasing infirmities bound him more closely than ever to the duties of his ministry; and, even had he been free, of what assistance could his presence have been to her in London, where he well knew that the doors which would be widely thrown open to the beautiful and high-born Ellen Percival would be hopelessly closed against the obscure country curate. He was obliged, therefore, to content himself with giving her such warning and counsel in writing as he thought she stood most in need of, and, meanwhile, to find what comfort he could in reflecting that she had at least one true friend in Louisa Conway, and that her own guilelessness of mind, and love for himself, would be a safeguard more efficacious still against the influences of the world.

Ellen received his letter as she was dressing for the drawing-room. At first she felt half inclined to be angry with him for supposing such a caution necessary; but, as she proceeded, her heart was touched by the tone of deep and anxious tenderness which ran throughout his very warnings, bearing evidence of how fervently she was beloved; and what woman's heart is there who, for the sake of such an assurance, would not forgive any real or imagined offence! She was standing with the letter in her hand, pondering tearfully on its contents, and making many earnest resolutions to follow the advice it contained, when Mrs. Davis entered her

room to tell her that my lord and my lady were dressed and already in the carriage. Ellen hastily thrust the letter into her sash, and ran down stairs, without even, as her maid angrily remarked, looking once in the glass to see "how beautiful she looked in her ostridge feathers and pink and silver train."

Lord Ethelwode thought it the duty of every woman, whose rank entitled her to appear there, to go to court whenever she happened to be within its precincts. It was, in his opinion, a mark of respect, of loyalty to their majesties, which ought not to be omitted in these irreverent times, and he had, therefore, insisted on Lady Ethelwode's appearing at this drawing-room. Her ladyship had loudly remonstrated, and declared that the fatigue would kill her—that she should faint away in the Presence; but his lordship was immoveable. It was, he said, the duty of every person of high station to testify openly their loyalty in these rebellious and levelling days; and he was determined that *his* wife should not be behindhand in setting the example.

Lady Ethelwode was forced to submit with what grace she could. It was some consolation to reflect that, as she must go, she should herself present her beautiful daughter; and she was still more reconciled to it by the happy excitement and occupation which the important business of choosing her own and Ellen's dress afforded for at least a week. It would have been inconsistent, however, to allow that she was in any degree pleased at going; and she really was tired enough, with the unusual fatigue of dressing, to assume with great *vraisemblance* the appearance of complete exhaustion when Lord Ethelwode assisted her into the carriage, and to be entitled to

complain, in her usual feeble voice, of his absurd tyranny in compelling her to undergo a fatigue she was so unfitted for.

"I am sure I never shall get through it," said she, as the carriage drove off. "My nerves are not equal to the fatigue and the excitement of presenting Ellen. I hope I shall not faint by the way—where are my salts? Good gracious! Davis has forgotten to give me my salts; I cannot go without them. Pull the string, Ellen—pull quick—we must go back for my salts!"

The string was pulled, and they drove back, in spite of Lord Ethelwode's angry remonstrance. It was some minutes before Mrs. Davis could find the salts; but, at length, they were brought, and the carriage drove on again. The next moment, however, Lady Ethelwode's hand was again on the string.

"My *chaufferette*!—they have actually forgotten my *chaufferette*! I shall catch my death of cold! We must turn back again to get my *chaufferette*!"

This time, however, Lord Ethelwode refused to allow the string to be pulled, and he told his wife that she must endure as she could the want of her *chaufferette*, but that he would not return for that or any other confounded nonsense. The carriage proceeded, therefore, without further delay, and Lady Ethelwode was obliged to content herself with complaining all the way of the agony she was suffering from cold feet, and predicting all the colds and inflammations which it would be sure to bring on.

But she forgot both her fears and complaints when she found herself in the brilliant crowd at St. James's, and heard the buz of admiration which greeted their appearance. Lady Ethelwode was

herself still eminently handsome, and all eyes were fixed on the mother and daughter, as they passed up the long line into the Presence. Royalty itself was heard, after the ceremony of presentation was over, to express unqualified admiration of the matronly beauty of the mother, and the fairy-like loveliness of the daughter; and the Louis XV. of England was allowed to be no mean judge of female beauty. Lady Ethelwode, who had been a month in town without receiving a single visit, was now surprised to find herself addressed as an old friend, or eagerly claimed as an acquaintance by a host of people she scarcely remembered ever having seen before.

"My dear Lady Ethelwode, how glad I am to see you! Where have you been all these years, that we have lost sight of you? I wish you had let me know you were in town, I should have been *so* happy to call upon you," was said to her by more than one person, on whom she had left cards above a week ago, which had never been returned.

Lady Frances Montague, who had carefully kept away from her indolent friend, in dread lest she should ask her to take charge of Ellen, was now amongst the first to press forward with her greetings.

"How d'ye do, my dear Lady Ethelwode? How d'ye do, Ellen, love? How long have you been in town?" (Lady Ethelwode's card had been on Lady Frances's table for a fortnight;) "The girls anxiously expected your arrival, I assure you, Ellen. Well," (in a whisper to Lady Ethelwode,) "you see I was a true prophet about your dear girl; I hear of nothing but her brilliant success at Lady Cardale's: the Duke of Dainsworth, they say, is

raving about her; but, my dear friend," (aloud,) is not this a dreadful exertion for you? If I had only known you meant Ellen to be presented at this drawing-room, I should have been too happy to have taken charge of her; not that in general I like to *chaperon* young ladies, having two girls of my own to look after; but for you and dear Ellen, of course there is nothing I would not do."

"Thank you, I am much obliged to you; but Lord Ethelwode insisted on my coming, so, of course, I determined on presenting Ellen myself, though the exertion is certainly too much for me. I should not, at all events, have troubled you, because I thought you were to present Louisa Conway."

"Oh dear no; Sir Charles chose to ask Lady Catherine St. John to do it; and, I confess, that I was glad that he did not apply to me, although I was rather hurt at his taking such a step without consulting me. You know, as her poor mother's sister, I had a right to expect my advice would be asked in such an important matter."

"Lady Catherine is a much better *chaperon* for her," said Minna; "she is as learned and dignified as Louisa herself; besides, as she is so soon to be her relation....."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Ellen.

"Now, my dear Ellen," said Minna, "pray do not be as provoking as Louisa herself, and pretend that you do not know that she is engaged to Mr. St. John; to be sure, it is not wonderful that she wishes to conceal it now, as the gentleman seems in no hurry to come home to claim his bride."

Ellen was on the point of making an indignant answer, when her words were arrested on her lips by the sight of Louisa herself, coming towards

them, with Lady Catherine; her countenance was so pale, and bore such evident signs of inward suffering, that Ellen was struck with it, and half feared there might be some truth in Minna's words.

Louisa's depression, however, arose from another cause: whilst kept stationary by the crowd, she had involuntarily heard a conversation between a gentleman and lady who were standing near her; they were commenting on the looks of a lady, who had just been presented on her marriage.

"Mrs. Danville seems to have comforted herself quickly enough for St. John's desertion," said the gentleman; "it was only this time last year that every body was talking of her engagement to him; and when he followed the Baron of Mowbray's example, and 'laughed and rode away,' people said she would die of a broken heart."

"Yes, but she thought better of it," replied the lady, "and married rich gouty Mr. Danville instead, to deprive Mr. St. John of the satisfaction of seeing her wear the willow; however, I hear that she has never been the same since, and she is certainly very much altered."

"St. John was a fool to go so far; he narrowly escaped having the father and brothers on his hands, demanding satisfaction: flirting with a pretty girl is all very well, but he should have drawn off, before the thing became so notorious."

"That is all you men think of," said the lady, laughing; "so long as you can do it with impunity, you do not care whether a heart is broken in your sport or not; however, I confess, I have little faith in broken hearts myself, and, in this instance, the lady deserved one, for being such a simpleton,

as to imagine that a man like Arthur St. John would clog himself with a dowerless wife; *pour l'amour de ses beaux yeux*."

At this moment the crowd opened a little in front, and the speakers moved on, unconscious that their words had been overheard, and of the bitter pang they had inflicted; every word fell like burning lead on Louisa's heart; St. John spoken of as fickle, dishonourable, mercenary; St. John, whom she had believed, and loved, because she believed him to be so high-minded, so generous, so sincere;—it could not be—it was false—she knew it must be false;—but still the words rang in her ears like a knell—the knell of departing trust and happiness.

This was the reason of the paleness which had excited Ellen's anxiety, and it was with difficulty that she summoned a smile to answer her friend's affectionate inquiry.

"Indeed, I am not ill, Ellen, dear, only tired with the heat and crowd; do not say any thing about it."

Louisa's hope of escaping notice was frustrated by Minna Montague, who attracted the attention of the whole party to her cousin's looks, by her affectedly anxious inquiries, and then added, in an audible whisper, that she hoped she had had no bad news from the Mediterranean.

Louisa haughtily turned away; colouring, however, in spite of herself. Lady Catherine St. John, who had some suspicion of the cause of her annoyance, good-naturedly proposed that they should go home at once. Louisa gladly acceded, and they moved on.

"We must be going too, Ellen," said Lady

Ethelwode; "I really am ready to drop with the fatigue of standing so long. I am sure I shall be laid up after this,—so pray come and see me, my dear Lady Frances."

Lady Frances promised to come very soon, and was profuse in her offers of service, to which she was the more strongly prompted by the sight of Sir Frederick Granville darting off to ascertain whether Lady Ethelwode's carriage was at hand; and the Duke of Dainsworth advancing to offer his arm to Ellen, to conduct her to it; in this, however, he was anticipated by Lord Caldwell, who had already taken possession of Ellen's arm.

"I suppose I shall meet you at the opera to-night," said he.

"Oh no,—mamma will not go out again, and I have no *chaperon*."

"But Mrs. Carew will, I am sure, be too happy to take her place, if you ask her; will you commission me to do so?"

Ellen suddenly remembered Edward's warnings.

"No, thank you," said she, "I do not like to trouble Mrs. Carew again so soon, and I have had enough dissipation for one day. I shall be glad to be quiet this evening."

Lord Caldwell wondered what had suddenly produced this love of quiet, but he had no time to ask, for they were now arrived at the carriage. As Ellen got in, she caught the long ends of her sash in the handle of the door; in disengaging them, the sash got loose, and Edward's letter fell out. In the hurry of the moment she did not perceive it, and the carriage drove off, without her having discovered her loss.

Lord Caldwell was turning away to look for his

own carriage, which was some way further down the line, when the direction of the letter, as it lay on the pavement, caught his eye. He picked it up, and his first impulse was to stop the carriage, and restore it at once to Ellen. But this was impossible, in consequence of the crowd and crush of carriages on the spot, and he put the letter in his pocket, with the intention of sending it to her as soon as he reached home. When he took it out, however, for the purpose of enclosing it to her, he looked at the direction again. The bold, free handwriting was evidently that of a man, and the post-mark of Ethelwode at once told him who the writer was. Ellen could have but one correspondent at Ethelwode,—her affianced husband.

“So this is a love-letter!” thought Lord Caldwell, as he turned it over and contemplated the broken seal, engraven with the initials E. A. “Since the seal is broken, I shall run no risk of being indicted for felony, if I take a peep inside. I am curious to know how our sanctified and philosophical parson writes a love-letter.”

Without any further scruples, his lordship opened the letter and addressed himself to its perusal. He had expected mere amusement from the sentimental effusions of an absent lover; but before he had got through the first page, he knitted his brow, and began to read more attentively.

“A more dangerous rival this, than I thought,” was his running commentary as he went on. “A man must be deucedly sure of a woman’s affection, before he would dare write to her a manly, sensible letter like this. Not one compliment—not one tit-bit of flattery to keep her vanity from starving. I must take care to provide it with a double por-

tion; for my best chance depends upon it being kept in flourishing condition. Humph! advice,—caution,—caution against myself, too. Confound the fellow's impudence! What can he know of me,—or of my associates? Now I understand the young lady's sudden fear of giving Mrs. Carew trouble, and her wish to be quiet this evening, when I spoke of meeting her at the opera. Affectionate enough, too; seems determined to make up in love what he denies in flattery,—for which he is clearly a fool,—a woman's vanity being twice as strong as her feelings.

“There is flattery, however, in the very love itself; especially when, as in this case, it seems to make the gentleman think only of his fair one, and forget himself. A dangerous rival, clearly,—and unless I wish to see him carry off the prize in spite of my teeth, I must bestir myself to more purpose than I have done yet. How St. John would laugh, after all my assurance of success, to see me baffled by a country parson, and a girl of eighteen! Then that pride incarnate, Lord Ethelwode, though he would lose more than I should, would, I verily believe, give up, without a sigh, his chance of recovering the old abbey lands, for the pleasure of sneering at my failure.

“By heavens, I will not give them such a triumph. I have never yet failed in what I determined upon, nor will I now. By fair means or foul, Ellen Percival shall be mine. And to begin, I will throw this letter into the fire. It will never do to give it back to her, to ponder over his confounded advice. There it goes,—she will think it was lost in the street, and will never be the wiser. I wish I could do the same by all his other letters,

past and to come. This correspondence must be stopped. But how?"

He sat watching the letter slowly smouldering away in the hearth, and turning over in his mind, meanwhile, all the possible means of accomplishing his object.

"I have it," exclaimed he, as the last spark died away from the ashes of Edward's letter, "Mademoiselle Juliani is the very person. Never knew a toady that could not be bribed. She shall intercept the letters. Ah, ah, *Monsieur le Curé*, with all your wisdom I shall beat you yet! And now this matter is settled, I can go in peace to the opera."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Un sol dubbio
E peggior d'ogui morte."

ALFIERI.

"*D. John.* How can'st thou cross this marriage ?

Borachio. Not honestly, my lord, but so covertly, that no dishonesty shall appear in me.

D. John. Be cunning in the working of this, and thy fee is a thousand ducats."

Much Ado About Nothing.

Louisa returned home from the drawing-room in a state of mind difficult to describe. She felt as one might feel who had been treading a path with security, and suddenly found that all the soil around was treacherous as quicksand ; or as one who had sold his all to purchase one treasure, one pearl of great price, and, in the midst of his joy, a careless bystander had pointed out to him that the pearl was false ! Every ray of hope was darkened, every stronghold of confidence weakened—a flood of bitterness was overflowing her soul, and for some time she sank beneath it unresistingly.

Her father dined out, and she had declined, on the plea of illness, to accompany Lady Catherine St. John to the opera ; thus she was left undisturbed to her misery. Every word she had heard that day, all that had reached her upon this fatal subject ever since she first came to town, returned with dreadful distinctness ; it seemed as if some

torturing demon were there, to hold up the frightful picture before her, and force her to behold it. The dreadful thought that St. John might have trifled with her, as he had done with another, was for a long time paramount, but, when she remembered his words, his looks, his long devotion, she refused to believe it; such shameless deceit was too dark for her truthful spirit; she would rather have thought that she herself had yielded to the vain illusion of a dream, than have entertained such a belief. But, though he might have loved *her*—with another he had been false—though to her he had worn the semblance of every virtue in his intercourse with the world, he had shown that they had no root in his heart.

The talents she had mourned over, as hitherto wasted and defrauded of their proper sphere, but which she had proudly hoped to see henceforth devoted to their highest purposes, had not only been wasted, but perverted from the noble uses for which Heaven had given them, to serve the low ends of the meanest ambition. He who had shown sympathy in her feelings, and seemed to own the same lofty standard of excellence, bowed before the low rules of worldly opinion, and followed no guide but selfishness, and a mean craving for the applause of that little world for which he lived. She remembered their many conversations on noble and stirring themes, but she no longer dared to trust to the impression they had made on her mind, to the blessed confidence they had inspired; the recollection of those happy hours was poisoned as she found that in his practice he had no sympathy with her; that their feelings, their principles, their religion, their guide in this life, their hopes

in another, were altogether different, severed wide as light and darkness.

It was with agony that Louisa felt this conviction forcing itself as sharp iron into her soul, that she felt it was vain any longer to reject with scorn every imputation, which wounded her own trust, that she ought even to be *thankful* for the opportunities afforded her of knowing more intimately the character of him to whom she would have trusted undoubtingly the happiness of her existence. But she could not feel this now.

"Better," she said to herself, "better had it been that my fate had been decided beyond control that fatal night. Oh, that I were bound to him by some tie, which might make a virtue of my present feelings, and give me the right to immolate myself to him!"

Louisa's was a strong mind; but in a nature like hers every thing is strong, and the passion which works upon such materials, and winds itself round a heart where nothing is weak or mean, acquires a fearful power. Thus, for a time, did it lay prostrate Louisa's higher nature; and it was long before she resumed sufficient composure to review the past with more calmness, and to strive to decide on something for the future. She thought of her father, and at first she resolved to tell him all her misery, and seek his assistance; but, as she dwelt upon this intention, she felt no strength to speak of *him*, to become *his* accuser, to raise with her own hands an invincible barrier between them. Her father would feel for all her suffering, but her proud heart started back in its bitterness at the thought even of his compassion, and alone she resolved to nerve herself for the task.

And now, Reginald's warning—that warning so scornfully rejected, so slightly attended to—rushed back upon her memory, and self-reproach added its stings to her previous sufferings—her own proud self-dependence had been her ruin—to that had she sacrificed the happiness of her existence. A flattering thought whispered that her father, also, had been deceived—but then no one had attempted to open *his* eyes—and her rash folly could receive no palliation from the deceit practised on another. The worship of talent had misled her, and now she remembered many a trifling thing, over which that talent had thrown a gloss, although it had grated harshly on her feelings, till she had wilfully cast it from her remembrance, and she felt that she had desecrated the high places of her soul, by admitting a false idolatry therein.

There was utter prostration and bitterness beyond the power of words to express in these reflections. Her self-respect was gone with the self-confidence she dared no longer entertain, and her proud spirit was, for a time, crushed beneath this new, and till now, unknown weight. Gradually, however, other thoughts arose. She turned from herself to him, and she asked herself whether in her condemnation of him pride was not still at work? Should she reject him utterly, whilst he was far away, perhaps in trouble and sorrow, unable to justify himself? Hope whispered that all might yet be well, and, though she did not yield long to its flattery, still she again yearned for St. John's return. Her earthly destiny would then be decided—till then she must bear her burden in silence—the words of such as Minna and her friend must be heard without betraying the wound

they inflicted; she must follow on her course with a calm, if not a smiling countenance, and sternly steel herself against her misery.

As she made this last proud resolve, she rose hastily from her seat, and found herself opposite a large mirror. As her eye fell upon her own countenance, she felt the full difficulty of the task she was assigning to herself; but in her present state of mind, there was a sort of desperate pleasure in the thought of some bodily struggle, and the hope of setting at fault the malice of those who had been instrumental in the destruction of her peace.

The next day she was engaged to spend wholly with Ellen, and, for the first time, she shrank from the thoughts of her friend's society. It would be easier to defy Mrs. Carew, than to elude Ellen's affectionate anxiety, and she would willingly have excused herself; but this could not be done; and when she remembered that it was but the beginning of her task, she bitterly felt that it would be needless to avoid it, and she schooled herself so effectually to meet it, that, when Ellen joined her at the appointed hour, she expressed her pleasure at finding her friend apparently so much better than she had been at the drawing-room. Louisa smiled as Ellen spoke, but some of the heart's bitterness was in that deceitful smile.

It was at an unusually early hour, that morning, that Lord Caldwell presented himself at Ethelwode House.

"Is Lady Ethelwode at home?" he inquired, as the heavy portal was thrown open to admit his well-known equipage.

The porter looked astonished that any one acquainted with Lady Ethelwode should ask such a

question at twelve o'clock in the day, and replied that her ladyship was not yet down stairs.

"Miss Percival, then?"

"She went out directly after breakfast, my lord, and I heard her say that she would not be at home till dinner time."

"Then, will you let me go up stairs to write a note, which I must leave for her?"

The request was, of course, assented to, and a footman immediately led the way into Lady Ethelwode's morning room, where, as Lord Caldwell had foreseen, Mademoiselle Juliani was sitting alone.

He bowed, and spoke to her with his usual civility, for it was a maxim of his that civility costs nothing, and buys a good deal; and in the case of Mademoiselle Juliani, who was little used to it from any one else, it had bought him a high place in her esteem and good graces, and already, more than once, had made her a ready and useful assistant in his manœuvres against the lovers. She looked astonished at his appearance at that hour, when he knew Miss Percival was out, and Lady Ethelwode was invisible, and he explained, that he wished to write a note to the former. She pointed out to him the writing table, and sat down again to her frame, in which she was preparing some work for Lady Ethelwode. The note was quickly written, and sealed, and Mademoiselle Juliani expected that Lord Caldwell would take up his hat and depart. But he seemed to have no such intention, for he came and seated himself beside her, and began admiring her work.

"What beautiful flowers! Really, at this distance, they look like a painting. You will be kind enough to give this note to Miss Percival as soon

as she comes home? Apropos of her, I do not think she seems to dislike London quite as much as she thought she would. Do you?"

Mademoiselle Juliani smiled; but she was too unused to give an opinion on her own responsibility, to venture on any more decided expression of assent.

"Ah! it *is* amusing, to see how quickly our London atmosphere has dispelled all her romantic notions! Now, do you not agree with me, that it would have been a thousand pities to bury such beauty as Miss Percival's in the country?"

This time, Mademoiselle Juliani gave a decided assent, for she had been in the habit of echoing Lady Ethelwode's opinion on the same subject regularly every day since their arrival in town.

"Certainly, there never was a more foolish, more imprudent match talked of, than this of Miss Percival and Mr. Annesley," continued his lordship. "I cannot conceive how Lady Ethelwode could consent to such a sacrifice of her daughter. I am sure it must be a great mortification to you, signora, to see a pupil, who would do you so much honour in the world, determined to throw herself away in this manner, and bury the talent you have so admirably cultivated."

"Your lordship does me much honour. It is certainly rather mortifying."

"And a great loss to you also, of course. Nobody will care who taught Mrs. Annesley to sing; but if Miss Percival became Lady Something or other, in London, every one would be dying to have the same singing mistress. You would make your fortune."

"Very true," said Mademoiselle Juliani, appa-

rently dazzled by such prospect. "Fortunately, I have no wish or need to give lessons now. I hope I am settled for life in Lady Ethelwode's family."

"Oh, of course. Lady Ethelwode could not now dispense with your services. But hers is a very precarious life. A cold, a nervous attack, might carry her off, and leave you dependant on your own resources; and, in that case, a pupil like Miss Percival, well established in the great world, would be of invaluable service. Besides, supposing Lady Ethelwode's life were ever so secure, which I trust it is, you would make more in two years, as a fashionable teacher, in London, than you could in ten as *dame de compagnie* to her ladyship."

"Very true," again assented Mademoiselle Juliani. But she went no farther;—she was at no loss to perceive the drift of Lord Caldwell's sudden interest in her prospects, and she was not to be led into promising the services he evidently wished to obtain from her, by so paltry a bribe. He had met his match in coolness and cunning, and he must pay her well, if he wished to secure her assistance. Lord Caldwell saw that he must adopt a bolder plan of operations. With all his profuseness of expenditure, when expenditure could bring credit, no one was more averse than his lordship to spending money, when other means could be made to accomplish his purpose as well. It was evident, however, that nothing but money would succeed in this case, and he proceeded accordingly.

"I honour your moderation, your disinterestedness, it is a rare quality in these days; and I agree with you (she had not said a word), that money is not worth such a sacrifice of ease and quiet. But there are things which money can procure, which

give it a value it never would have in itself. For instance, if you had a wish to return to your own country—to Italy."

"Italy!" For a moment the humble companion forgot her usual servility of attitude, and her ignoble countenance lighted up with a sudden beauty of expression, as she echoed the word. "Italy,—my own country? Oh, I would give up all—all I have in the world, to see it once more! But nothing would enable me to do this," added she, in a lower voice; "I have no hope—none."

She bent down again over her frame, and Lord Caldwell saw a tear drop upon it as she did so.

To one who revered human nature, as the work and image of the Creator, that tear would have seemed a beautiful and holy thing—a messenger from the inner temple of the heart, telling that that image was not wholly defaced, that there was yet one spring of pure and true feeling even in the seared and degraded mind of the habitual sycophant. But Lord Caldwell looked on the human heart only as a pipe for his finger to play what stops he pleased, and his companion's emotion only interested him as an indication that he had touched the right chord—that he had found the means to degrade that mind still further to the level necessary to the accomplishment of his purposes.

"Pardon me," said he, answering her last words, "you have in your own power, not only the hope, but the certainty. You look surprised; but I will explain myself. I need not now tell a person of your discernment that the end of my visits here is not merely to enjoy the pleasure of Lord and Lady Ethelwode's society. You smile—you have of

course been long aware that Miss Percival is my object. At the same time, you know the difficulties which lie in my way. I cannot overcome these difficulties without your assistance (you see I deal frankly with you); and, if you will engage to lend it to me, I shall be too happy to show my gratitude by enabling you not only to return to Italy, but to live there in affluence. Have I explained myself clearly?"

Nothing could be clearer; but, before Mademoiselle Juliani gave her assent to this compact, she desired to understand more fully what was required of her, and what would be the price of her services. She was staggered when Lord Caldwell spoke of intercepting letters. To shake Ellen's trust in her lover's affection by subtle insinuations, to wound her by false reports of his actions, to blacken his character by cunningly-devised calumnies — all this was easy enough, and she willingly promised to do it; but she hesitated before the deeper and bolder guilt of intercepting their correspondence, and shrank from the risk she must incur.

"I cannot, dare not do this," said she, in answer to Lord Caldwell's arguments.

"Yet, unless this is done, all the rest is useless. Will you, for such trifling scruples, sacrifice your hope of ever returning to Italy?"

Mademoiselle Juliani pondered.

"The risk is very great, my lord; but, if your lordship would add another fifty pounds a year to the annuity, I might venture to incur it in your service."

Lord Caldwell felt greatly inclined to curse the greediness and cunning of his ally; but he was at

her mercy, and was forced to submit to her conditions. He comforted himself with the thought that promises need not always be binding. With this mental reservation, he agreed to give the required fifty pounds, and, as an earnest of his gratitude, he begged Mademoiselle Juliani's acceptance of a twenty pound note, which was, he said, but a small remuneration for the promise of such services as hers.

It was agreed, however, between the confederates, that, for the present, the correspondence of the lovers should be allowed to continue. This was against Lord Caldwell's wishes, but Mademoiselle Juliani, with a woman's insight into a woman's feelings, justly remarked that, whilst Ellen's trust in Annesley's character remained unimpaired, the interception of his letters would merely excite in her suspicions of foul play, without shaking her faith in him. No woman, in the plenitude of love and confidence like hers, would believe in such a sudden change in the object of her worship. Her mind must first be poisoned by suspicion, her confidence shaken by calumny, till she was prepared to consider the failure of his letters "confirmation strong as proofs from holy writ" of her worst fears.

Lord Caldwell deferred to his companion's superior knowledge of her own sex, and, this matter being settled; and their future plan of operations decided upon, he took his leave, and drove rapidly home, to give the last finishing touch to the eloquent speech which he was to pronounce that night in the House of Lords, in favour of a bill of pains and penalties for the suppression of bribery and corruption.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ I love him :
And that's the heaviest link of the long chain
To love whom we esteem not.”

BYRON.—*Sardanapalus.*

“ O, child of earth ! he cried,
Already in thy spirit thus divine,
Whatever weal or woe betide,
Be that high sense of duty still thy guide,
And all good powers will aid a soul like thine.”
Curse of Kehama.

“ Are you going to the opera to-night, Louisa ?” asked Ellen, one afternoon, as they were riding together in the park.

“ No ; Lady Catherine is not well, and I do not care enough about it to ask my father to go with me.”

“ Then I wish you would come with us, and we could have a comfortable evening together, which we so seldom have now.”

“ What can you be saying about comfortable evenings in the midst of a London season ?” asked Sir Charles Conway, who had caught Ellen's last words.

“ Only about a comfortable evening at the opera,” answered Ellen, smiling. “ I want Louisa to go with mamma and me to-night. I suppose you have no objections, Sir Charles ?”

“ None whatever. I am going to dine out, ”

am very glad that I shall not leave her to spend the evening alone. Perhaps I shall join you myself after dinner."

"Then, Loo, you had better come and dine with us, and we can go together."

Louisa agreed to her friend's proposal in a tone of passive indifference, so different from her usual animation, that Ellen looked anxiously at her.

"Do not come if it bores you, or if you are unwell, dear Loo," said she, affectionately. "If you do not feel up to going out, shall I come to you instead, and spend a quiet evening with you at home. I do not care the least about the opera to-night; so just say which you will like best."

But Louisa liked best to go to the opera. She shrank from the thoughts of such a *tête-à-tête* as Ellen proposed: in its affectionate intimacy, the struggle to conceal her inward misery would be a thousand times more painful and difficult than to cover it with a smiling mask in the eyes of the world; so, rousing herself to assume a gayer tone, she told Ellen she could not think of doing any thing so old maidish, as she was quite well, and had no manner of excuse, and that she should enjoy going to the opera with her very much.

Ellen said no more on the subject. Although Louisa's forced gaiety of tone could not deceive her, that was neither the time nor the place to question her further, and she had heard enough of what had passed at Lady Leicester's ball to guess without difficulty something of the cause of Louisa's depression.

The opera was the "Medea," and, as Louisa listened to Pasta's scarcely earthly music, she was glad that she had come. Even her heavy sorrow

gave way beneath the magic power of that extraordinary woman, and she forgot her own misery in her intense feeling of the supernatural wretchedness of the Medea. The first act was over, and Louisa sat still wrapped in the kind of trance into which she had been thrown, scarcely hearing the remarks Lady Ethelwode, who always came to the opera because it was the only amusement which required no exertion, was partly addressing to her.

"How very full the opera is to-night! I have not seen it so full this season. It makes the place look very gay, but really it is oppressively hot. Don't you think so? Ah, there is Lady Cornwell, muffled up to the throat as usual. How absurd it is of that woman always to be fancying herself ill! I do think there is no affectation so ridiculous as that of a *petite santé*, especially in a stout, healthy woman like that. I do not see Lady Frances and your cousins to-night, Louisa; were they not coming? Ah! there is Minna, I see, in Mrs. Carew's box. I wonder who is that gentleman who is just come in, and whom they seem so glad to see. Dear me! yes, it is—and yet I do not think it can be—Louisa, my dear, is not Mr. St. John still abroad?"

Louisa started at the question.

"Yes, I believe so," answered she, hurriedly.

"It is very odd; I am almost sure that is he in Mrs. Carew's box, or somebody extraordinarily like him. There, he is looking this way now, and I think it is certainly Mr. St. John."

It was St. John. The first glance assured Louisa of this fact. Even though a film seemed to have come over her eyes, and a sudden giddiness seized her brain, she could not for an instant mistake

that tall and graceful form, unlike any other she had ever seen. There he was; but when—how had he come? There he was, standing beside Mrs. Carew, talking eagerly to her, confirming by his looks and manner the intimacy which Louisa had so long tried to disbelieve. A deadly sickness came over her, and she sank back on her seat, unable to support herself.

Ellen quietly slipped a *vinaigrette* into her hand, and then, leaning forward so as to hide her from the observation of Lady Ethelwode and Sir Charles Conway, who had just entered the box, began talking eagerly to the latter about the opera, the people, the dinner-party he had just left, so as to prevent Louisa's silence from being remarked.

"Do you know, Sir Charles," said Lady Ethelwode, after a few minutes, "that Mr. St. John is come home?"

"St. John!" exclaimed he, glancing hastily at Louisa as he spoke. "When did you hear of it?"

"There he is, in Mrs. Carew's box. No, he has just left her, I see; but he was there a minute ago."

"Are you sure it was he?"

"Oh, yes, quite sure. Louisa saw him too, and it was certainly Mr. St. John. Was it not, Louisa?"

"Yes, certainly," said Ellen, interposing. "Ah! there are the orchestra coming back to their places; thank Heaven! I thought the second act never would begin."

"I wonder Mr. St. John has not come to speak to us," said Lady Ethelwode. "He must have seen

us, for he was looking this way just before he left Mrs. Carew's box."

At that moment the door opened, and Louisa *felt* that St. John was entering. The next instant she heard his voice, returning Sir Charles and Lady Ethelwode's greeting. She had half expected that the voice would be changed, and she was startled by its familiar sound, which seemed as if it were but yesterday that she had heard it last. Ellen had moved quietly away, to give him room to come up to her, and he was now at her side. It was fortunate that she sat in the shadow of the red curtain, so that her deadly paleness, and the trembling of her whole frame, could not be discerned.

"Miss Conway—Louisa!" said St. John, in a low voice, as he held out his hand to her.

The words thrilled to her inmost heart; their very tone told her that he was unchanged—that he had come back true to her, and everything else was forgotten; for the first time she raised her eyes, and as they met his her whole soul was revealed in the glance. He took her unresisting hand, and pressed it between his; but the next moment she hastily withdrew it. All that had passed since they had met flashed through her mind at that moment, and she turned away from him with a sensation of unutterable anguish.

"Have you not one word of greeting for me?" asked St. John, in the same low voice, as he watched with uneasy surprise the workings of her countenance.

Louisa felt the necessity of rousing herself. There was a spell in that voice which made it necessary to collect all her strength to save herself

from yielding to its fascination. Her pride, too, came to her aid; she could not bear to think that any one should see the weakness which made her face crimson with shame; making a violent effort, she said, in a tone whose unnatural calmness startled St. John—

“How long have you been in England—in town, Mr. St. John?”

“I arrived only to-day. I should have hoped that such a question was unnecessary, however. Do a few months produce such a change in you, that you have no difficulty in supposing that I have been more than a few hours in town without seeking you? I thought you knew me better.”

Louisa could not say what she was then feeling in her heart of hearts—that it was not *her* he had sought first.

“Your return was so unexpected,” she began.

“That it is unwelcome, I perceive,” said St. John, drawing back with an offended tone. “I beg your pardon, Miss Conway, for having presumed on the strength of past friendship to think that it might be otherwise, and to have intruded it upon you.”

“Mr. St. John!” exclaimed Louisa, in a tone of mingled indignation and reproach, and looking up to him as she spoke.

“Louisa, forgive me; look at me again,” said he, as she turned away to hide the tears which rose to her eyes in spite of all her efforts.

“Ah, St. John, is that you?” exclaimed Lord Caldwell, who had just entered the box. “When did you arrive? I thought you were still in the Mediterranean?”

St. John sincerely wished that his lordship were

there himself, or farther still; but he was obliged to keep this wish to himself, and to answer his questions.

"Well, I am glad you are returned safe in life and limb, and in *heart* too, I hope," said Lord Caldwell, enjoying his irritation. "Mrs. Carew alarmed us the other day by telling us that you were in great danger of losing that, or had lost it already, to some Calypso of the colonies."

"I wish Mrs. Carew would learn not to talk such confounded nonsense," said St. John, with uncontrollable irritation. The next moment, however, it gave way to a glow of pleasure. This, then, was the cause of Louisa's coldness—of her strange demeanour. She was jealous. Louisa jealous! St. John's heart beat high at a thought so flattering to his love and his vanity. He turned again towards her, determined to ascertain without delay if his suspicions were well-founded.

"Surely," said he, in a low tone, "*you* never believed such an absurd rumour?"

"No, I never believed *that*," answered Louisa, summoning up all her strength to speak steadily. "Would that I could have disbelieved everything else as easily!" added she, in a voice so low as to be scarcely audible.

St. John's elation at once vanished. He knew her too well to doubt, for an instant, that she was speaking the truth. No jealousy had darkened that noble mind; and it was now with a kind of dread that he thought over every other possible cause of the evident change in her feelings towards him. He had caught her last words, and he would have asked their meaning, but Louisa had again drawn her chair nearer to Ellen's, so as to

preclude the possibility of private conversation; and he was forced, however reluctantly, to await another opportunity. Never, perhaps, had Pasta's Medea been listened to with such indifference as it was by Louisa and St. John that night. It is even doubtful whether either of them heard that she was singing; and when the curtain fell, Louisa leant back in her chair with a feeling of thankfulness that at length it was over.

"Do you wish to stay for the ballet, Louisa?" asked her father, who had watched her anxiously during the whole evening.

"Oh, no! I had much rather go home at once," said she, rising as she spoke.

St. John started from his reverie, and assisted her in putting on her shawl; but when he offered his arm, she thanked him, and said that she would take her father's. He drew back, and bowed coldly to her as she left the box.

"Good night," said she, in an ill-assured voice, almost involuntarily holding out her hand.

He seized it, and pressed it to his own.

"The last time we parted," said he, in a voice which she alone could hear, "it was not thus. Have you so soon forgotten that night?"

It was fortunate that the blaze of light which they had just left made the darkness of the corridor too great to allow St. John to perceive Louisa's emotion as he spoke. She withdrew her hand in silence, and quickly moved on. He was too proud to follow her; and he turned back, mortified and indignant at her altered manner, whilst she allowed her father to lead her on, with no definite feeling in her heart, but an aching longing for peace,

whilst she felt that there could be no peace till this weary struggle was over.

The next morning it was in vain that Louisa attempted to fix her attention to her usual occupations. Books and painting were tried alternately, but without effect. She read page after page without comprehending the sense of the words which were before her, and closed the book, at last, in despair. Her hand trembled too much to allow her to hold her brush; and, after very nearly spoiling the picture she was working at, she gave that up, too, as hopeless. Every horse or carriage which entered the square made her start; every footstep on the stairs made her heart beat almost to suffocation; and she was forced to take two or three turns up and down the room before she could regain any thing like composure. Every instant she expected, yet dreaded, to hear St. John's well-known step, for she felt sure that he would call that morning. At one moment she asked herself whether, if he came, he ought to be admitted, and was on the point of giving orders to exclude him; the next, she grew impatient that he did not come. She had made an engagement to go with Lord Ethelwode and Ellen to the exhibition, at one o'clock; and, forgetting how early the hour was for morning visits, she was almost angry with St. John for not having foreseen her intention, and called before. Once she thought of breaking her engagement, but she drove the thought away with a blush of shame at her own weakness. She recalled all her stern resolutions, and felt, that if she wished to keep them, she had better avoid the dangerous temptation of a *tête-à-tête* interview with him; and she tried to feel that the necessity she

was under to go out so early was a fortunate circumstance, since she would thereby be enabled to escape it.

A carriage drove up to the door as the clock struck one. Louisa flew to the window; the sound was too light for Lord Ethelwode's heavy coach. There was a gentleman's cabriolet at the door, and a servant was in the act of knocking. Louisa leant back against the marble console, trembling in every limb. It must be St. John; but how should she meet him? what could she say to him? She almost wished she could escape from the room, but she had not strength to reach the door. She heard the hall-door open and shut again, and then there were footsteps on the stairs: the next moment a footman entered.

"Mr. Hope has just left this, with his compliments, ma'am," said he, as he laid a parcel of books on the table.

Louisa sank into a chair as the man left the room. The cab drove off, and she was again left to recover her composure as she could before the arrival of her party.

In a few minutes they were at the door, and she joined them, repeating to herself how fortunate it was that St. John had not called that morning.

Once in the presence of strangers, Louisa's usual self-possession returned; and, in a few minutes, she was talking as quietly to Lord Ethelwode and Ellen as if the last twenty-four hours had been free from sorrow and agitation as an infant's sleep.

"You are going to Lady Catherine St. John's to-night, I suppose?" said Ellen. "Do you know, she has been kind enough to ask me — out of compliment to you, I imagine, as she is so fond of you."

Louisa had forgotten this engagement until Ellen reminded her of it: and the thought that Arthur would be there; that it would be impossible to avoid him; that perhaps in a few hours she would be called upon to decide irrevocably on her fate, plunged her again into doubt and fear, and the struggle of joy and dread which the idea of seeing him now occasioned.

She recollected herself, however, sufficiently to answer Ellen's question, and added, "I hope you mean to go. There will, probably, be some good music."

"I should like it very much, but then I should lose my *chaperon* for the Duchess of N——'s ball, and that I could not think of giving up."

"The noisiest and most crowded parties are always Ellen's choice," said Lord Ethelwode. "Your taste is different, I believe, Miss Conway?"

"Certainly; according to your definition of Ellen's taste, mine differs widely," said Louisa, smiling. "In truth, I do like Lady Catherine St. John's small parties better than any others. Balls and assemblies are dazzling, at first, by their brilliancy; but one soon gets tired of them."

"My dear Loo, what is there half so pleasant as a ball, except the Opera?" exclaimed Ellen.

"Many things, in my opinion. The tone of conversation, or rather the *no-conversation*, and the late hours, do not suit me at all. I am very fond of society, but I think balls scarcely deserve the name."

"I wish I cared as little about them as you do," said Ellen, with a sigh, which grieved Louisa, for it was the first time she had observed any thing to indicate that her friend felt with regret the diffe-

rence between her present life, and that she had chosen for herself.

Lord Ethelwode's presence prevented her making any remark, and she turned towards the window. At that moment an open barouche drove rapidly round the corner of a street, and she instantly recognized St. John, seated beside Mrs. Carew, and engaged in animated conversation. He was so intent upon his companion, that he did not see her, and her aching eyes followed them till another turn hid them from her sight.

He had been with Mrs. Carew, then, while she was so tremblingly expecting him. He had sought the society of another, and, perhaps, had not even thought of her. Louisa could have hidden her face in the dust for very shame and humiliation, as she recollected the emotion of that morning. And he himself had seen her weakness the night before; perhaps he was telling Mrs. Carew of his triumph, and Louisa could almost see the sneer with which the account of her folly would be listened to, and hear Mrs. Carew's hateful laugh ringing in her ears, as it had done during all that weary night after Lady Leicester's ball.

She was aroused by the carriage stopping at the door of the exhibition, and she was obliged to master her emotion, and resume the calm demeanour which was necessary to avoid attracting the attention of others. They walked slowly through the rooms, which, notwithstanding the early hour, were already crowded, and Louisa forced herself to look at the pictures, and reply to Lord Ethelwode's and Ellen's remarks, though more than once her manner was so absent, and her voice so changed in its tone, that Ellen was

startled, and anxiously watched her friend. They were sitting for a moment on one of the benches, when Louisa, whose eyes had been wandering restlessly round the room, was struck by the figure of a gentleman standing at a little distance, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of the picture before him. It was one of Stanfield's beautiful sea-pieces, and had attracted Louisa's attention before by its resemblance to some part of the bold scenery near Oaklands. The gentleman who was now looking at it so intently had his back turned to her, but she could not mistake the figure: it must be Reginald Talbot. The next moment he turned, and their eyes met.

His first impulse was to come towards her; and then he hesitated, as if half inclined to avoid the meeting; but, as he saw her rise, and hold out her hand with a bright smile, he instantly advanced, and warmly pressed it in his own.

"How long have you been in town? Why have you not come to see us?" asked she, looking up in his face, which seemed to her to have grown pale and thin.

"I have not been here long," he answered; "I intended to call upon Sir Charles to-day or to-morrow. Is he here?"

"No; he had some business to do, and could not come with us. He will be delighted to see you, for he has been very anxious to hear from you, as the election at H—— is coming on very soon."

"And you, Louisa, are you glad to see me? We parted in anger, ..."

Louisa coloured, and turned away, as the recollection of all that had passed that evening arose in

her mind — that warning so proudly rejected, and now so bitterly justified. She remained silent, and Reginald continued.

“You are angry with me still. I should have expected this, and avoided this meeting.”

“No, indeed, Reginald, I am not angry, I am very glad we have met,” said she, in a tone so mild and sad, that it went to his very soul. He was on the point of speaking again, when he saw her suddenly start, and change colour. He turned round to see what had caused her emotion, and perceived Mr. St. John advancing towards them. He started up from the seat he had taken beside Louisa.

“Reginald,” she exclaimed, in a trembling voice, as he moved away; but Reginald did not hear her. He was already lost amongst the crowd, and in another moment was rushing at the speed of a madman down the street.

Louisa had seen not only St. John, but Mrs. Carew, who was leaning on his arm, and talking and laughing with all the elation of successful malice, for she felt that she had now the power to inflict on Louisa’s proud spirit all the mortification she had so long and so ineffectually tried to make her feel. It was by no means, however, St. John’s intention to appear in Louisa’s eyes as a dangler in the train of Mrs. Carew. He had already penetrated the latter’s aversion to her, and he determined to baffle her petty spite. He lingered before the picture they had been admiring, when Louisa perceived them, till a party of people with whom he knew Mrs. Carew was intimate came up to speak to her, and, while she was engaged in shaking hands and exchanging greetings, he said :—

“As you are now with friends, Mrs. Carew, I

will leave you, if you will excuse me. *Au revoir.*" And, laughing inwardly at her evident mortification, he rapidly followed Louisa, who had moved on with her party, and joined her just as the press of the crowd had separated her for a moment from Ellen and Lord Ethelwode. The latter turned round to offer his arm again, but, seeing St. John beside her, he said:—

"Will you take care of Miss Conway, Mr. St. John? It is almost impossible to walk three together in this crowd."

St. John had already offered his arm, and Louisa, whatever might be her inclination, had no alternative but to accept it.

They walked on for a minute or two in silence; at length St. John said, in a constrained tone:—

"From the cordiality of your reception, Miss Conway, I may conclude that I was purposely denied entrance, when I called on you this morning?"

"This morning!"

"Yes; I took the liberty, which I thought so long an acquaintance might justify, of calling so early as half-past one, thinking that I should thereby make sure of finding you. But I was refused admittance."

"I went out with Lord Ethelwode and Miss Percival at one," said Louisa, whose displeasure at the tone of his address was forgotten in the relief she felt at hearing that he had, at least, attempted to see her before he went to Mrs. Carew.

"Forgive me," cried St. John, "it is you yourself who drive me to suspect you. Your manner is so altered, that I cannot but fear you are equally changed in everything."

"I do not easily change," said Louisa, in a very

low voice, sighing involuntarily as she spoke, at the recollection of all the misery it had cost her to think even of a change."

"Even if those almost inaudible words were not meant for me to hear, I thank you for them," said St. John, in a tone which went to her heart. "Louisa, you cannot have acquired a pleasure in tormenting me; do you then know all that you have made me suffer since last night?"

"Yet your look is gayer than mine, this morning," said Louisa, with irrepressible bitterness.

"I am more practised in concealing what I feel from the eyes of the world. I know it better—"

"Yes! but it is not well to be practised in the ways of this hollow world. The mask it forces one to wear on the countenance, may become a habit of dissimulation in the heart; may lead to deceit—"

"You are speaking in enigmas. This is not your usual frank mode of expression. You are changed indeed!" he exclaimed, with a tone of such heartfelt sorrow, that Louisa forgot everything but that he was by her side,—that she had wounded him. She looked up to him for an instant, and all that a look could express, of regret and of affection, was revealed in that glance. A warm pressure of the hand and a smile, which told her that one look of hers was enough to dissipate every cloud, were her reward; and all the doubts, the fears, the suffering, the resolutions of the last few weeks, were at that moment forgotten—and she was again, for one brief instant, perfectly, intensely happy.

It was fortunate for Louisa's yielding reason, that this dangerous *tête-à-tête* was interrupted by

Lord Ethelwode and Ellen joining them in the vestibule, which they had now reached. As the tide of passion subsided, and left her again the power to reflect, she saw that it was absolutely necessary to avoid being alone with Arthur, until she could finally decide upon the course she ought to pursue; she felt that she had not strength to withstand the seduction of his words and looks, and that she must fly from the temptation which she was unable to encounter. She was soon called upon to act on this resolve, for, as he was on the point of parting with her, he said,

“Shall you be at home this evening, if I call?”

Louisa made a strong effort over herself, and answered steadily,

“No; we are engaged this evening, and for every evening this week, I believe.”

St. John looked at her in astonishment, but there was no time to say anything, and he handed her into the carriage in silence.

In the tumult of feelings which oppressed her, when she found herself once more in the solitude of her own room, self-reproach was, perhaps, the keenest of all. She felt that it was unjust and cruel, to allow St. John to perceive her secret affection, and thus to strengthen and confirm in him hopes which might never be realized. She was angry with herself, and humiliated by her own weakness, in being unable to bear the increased difficulty which his presence gave to her task. It was comparatively easy, at a distance, to analyze his character, and to resolve to rule her conduct by the dictates of unbending principle; but it was almost impossible to preserve her self-possession in his presence. Lady Catherine's party now recurred

to her, and she felt that she had not strength to encounter another trial so soon. Although he had not mentioned it, she felt sure that he would be there; and in a large party it would be difficult to avoid him, if he again sought her, as he had done that morning.

She had been pondering some time on the means of excusing herself from going, and had sunk at last into one of those listless attitudes, which indicate a willingness in the mind to sleep,—to let all its faculties sink into torpor, that their activity may no longer be exercised upon one weary subject; when her father, who had entered the room unperceived, and had been watching her anxiously for some minutes, advanced and seated himself by her side.

“I fear you have overtired yourself of late, my child,” said he, gently, “you do not look well.”

Louisa started at the sound of his voice, but recovered herself instantly.

“I am not very tired, dear father, only very idle. This London life makes me so, I think.”

“It did not have that effect upon you at first, and I had hoped that going out so moderately as you do, you might have retained, unimpaired, your activity and energy of mind.”

“Then, I fear, I am less steady of purpose than you gave me credit for,” said Louisa, smiling, but so languidly, that the smile fell like a tear on her father’s heart.

“Do not let us speak in mysteries to each other, my child,” said he, drawing her towards him. “Let me read your heart, as I have ever done, and try what a father’s love can do to soothe or lighten whatever lies heavily there.”

"Father!" exclaimed Louisa, suddenly looking up, and blushing crimson, "what do you know?"

"I know that you are suffering—unavoidably suffering;—I know that you are struggling with yourself, and I would bring my strength to aid yours. Do you wish to reject my assistance?"

"Oh no, no!" cried Louisa, melted by his tenderness, and throwing her arms round his neck, "I have been wrong in remaining silent so long. Dearest father, will you forgive me? it was so—so very painful!"

"I know it, my own child, and I do not blame you. I have been silent myself for the same reason. But I have not watched you the less anxiously; I have seen your conflict, the painful change in your mind, and whilst I saw you nobly struggling against yourself, I would not wound you by speaking. But now, dearest, I know your burden is heavier than it was, and I would help you to bear it. Let us, then, be frank with each other, as we have ever been. I have much to blame myself for,—it was my duty to have shielded you from this. But I let myself be blinded by a prospect which seemed so full of advantage to you."

"You think it so no more, then?" asked Louisa, in a low but steady voice, looking up, as she spoke, with an expression of such intense anxiety, that her father felt her sentence of happiness or misery hung upon his words. For one moment his courage failed him; but he felt that his duty was plain, and he answered firmly.

"I believe—I fear—that St. John is unworthy of you."

Louisa's head sank on his shoulder, and a burn-

ing tear dropped upon his hand; but she made no answer.

"Louisa! my child! I would not bid you yet despair; report may deceive us; his character may be purer than we now think. I only wish you to pause—to examine well before you trust the happiness of your life to his keeping; for I know that you could never be happy with one whose character you could not reverence. Speak to me, my child."

"You are right," said Louisa, in an agitated voice: "you are right; it shall be ended."

"Nay, do not be rash, Louisa. I said only, reflect, weigh this matter well before you act. His character is not what the world would call deeply stained. I have inquired much, and no flagrant breach of this world's code has made his name infamous. Consider,—measure your strength,—if your happiness is indissolubly linked with him....

"No, father; I will be more worthy of you. Your indulgence for me makes you weak. It is not so that I have heard you speak at other times."

Louisa had raised her head as she spoke, and though her lips quivered, her eye was fixed steadily on her father's face, as if to read his inmost soul.

"My noble child!" exclaimed her father, his voice trembling with emotion. "I should give you strength, and not seek to weaken you. But we will examine together. If you can retard a final explanation for some days longer, then you will be better able to form your resolution; and may God strengthen you to keep it, whatever it may be!—whether you resolve to banish him from your heart, or to vow to him *reverence and honour*."

He spoke slowly and distinctly, weighing upon the last words.

"No, no, that cannot be," murmured Louisa; and then she remained silent for some minutes. "Dearest father," said she at last, "I feel it cannot be; but surely I owe something to *him*. Have I a right to keep him in suspense?—It is a cruel suffering to be obliged to doubt," she added, almost inaudibly.

"My child, you must judge for yourself. The step you are about to take will be irrevocable. Do not, for his sake as well as your own, let your high-wrought feeling of delicacy urge you on to take it, before you have considered it sufficiently."

"Oh, father! I have thought much," said Louisa, as she remembered the many sleepless nights and anxious days during which she had weighed again and again his every action, pondered over every look and word. At that moment she felt as if she should be glad at once to put an end to all possibility of hesitation; but when the thought assumed reality, as she dwelt upon it, she shrank from it as too dreadful, and her heart whispered that her father might be right; there might yet be reason to hope. She must see him again; she must wait a few days longer ere she finally dashed to the ground with her own hand the whole fabric of her happiness.

Now that her long and painful reserve with her father was over, Louisa opened her whole heart to him. Reginald's warning, her pride, her anger, her fear of speaking of St. John, which had restrained her from telling her father of their quarrel, her recent self-reproaches—she told all, and seemed to feel a melancholy pleasure in unburdening her heart, and laying her weary head to rest once more in full confidence on his breast. *There*, at least,

was a sure resting-place, and love that could not change; and as he received her confession, made with the bitterness of one who had never felt remorse before, he drew her nearer to him, and softened her self-accusations, and gently raised her self-respect, and soothed her sorrow with the fond words that are so blessed to the ears of the wretched, and fall like balm on the sore and aching heart,—till something more like peace than she had known for weeks stole over her spirit, and hushed its struggles into temporary rest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ Je connais des princes du sang, des princes étrangers, des grands seigneurs, des ministres d'état, des magistrats, et des philosophes, qui fileroient pour l'amour de vous. Que demandez-vous davantage ? ”
Lettres de Madame de Sevigné.

“ It is thy own imperfect nature's fault,
That lets one doubt of him arise within.”
Curse of Kehama.

Ellen was now fairly launched into the whirlpool of dissipation. She had become *the fashion*, and cards and invitations poured in from all quarters. No party was now thought complete unless it were graced by the presence of the beautiful Miss Percival; no amateur concert could be got up unless she would promise to be one of the performers. Lady Ethelwode was delighted whenever Ellen drove out with her, to see her barouche become a point of universal attraction. Lord Ethelwode was astonished when he rode with his hitherto neglected stepdaughter, at the brilliant train which gathered round them, and the sight, the noblest in the land, men to whom he himself yielded in ancient descent, waiting eagerly on her smiles. Ellen herself enjoyed her triumph with the natural exultation of a young and eager mind, before repetition has deadened the zest of novelty, or experience taught the hollowness of such pleasures. The weary monotony of the first weeks of her stay in town

was at an end, and she would probably have forgotten that she had ever hated London, had not her mother reminded her of it, by saying generally once a day—

“Well, Ellen, I hope you are thankful to me now for insisting on your coming to town, and going through a season before you settled down into a hum-drum country clergyman’s wife. Do you not see now what folly it would have been to bury yourself at Ethelwode for the rest of your life?”

This was a question which Ellen could not always answer to her own satisfaction, and she generally evaded it by hurrying on to something else. She had never been much in the habit of analyzing her own feelings, and it was not likely she should begin to do so now, in the perpetual hurry and whirl of a London season. It was much pleasanter to do as she had ever done—enjoy to the utmost what was enjoyable in the present, without inquiring too closely into the cause and consequences of her pleasure. Accordingly, she threw herself, with all the eagerness of her nature, into the career of dissipation, quieting, meanwhile, her own occasional scruples, and silencing Louisa’s frequent warnings by saying, that it would soon be over, and that she should have plenty of time to be quiet, and should enjoy quiet all the more from the contrast, when she returned to settle at Ethelwode.

Edward soon perceived this difference in her mode of life. Her letters were still as frank and affectionate as ever, but they were much shorter and more cursory. She was always obliged to conclude in a hurry, because she was going here, or expected

there, or had had so much to do that she had only time to write a few lines to save the post. Edward felt that he ought to have expected this—that it was the natural consequence of novelty and excitement in a nature like Ellen's; but still he was grieved and disappointed. He felt that there was no longer any sympathy between them—that their views, their hopes, their pleasures, were utterly different. He did not doubt her affection; but he dreaded lest she should find it at variance with her tastes and pursuits—lest, when she returned to him, she should discover that the lot she had chosen was not calculated to make her happy.

Something of all this was evident in his letters, in spite of his attempts to conceal it; and in those rare moments, when a pause in the torrent of dissipation made the fever of excitement yield to quieter thoughts, Ellen was conscience-stricken by their tone of anxious sadness. At such times the full tide of love would flow back over her heart, and she would turn away, with momentary disgust, from the hollow pleasures which usually engrossed her, and would yearn, with all the heart-hunger of other days, to be once more beside him—to prove to him that she was still unchanged—that she was still his own, in heart and soul, as wholly, as devotedly, as in the first and brightest days of their love.

It was in one of these moods that she one day broke through an engagement she had made to go to a breakfast with Mrs. Carew, and went, instead, to spend the morning with Louisa Conway. Mrs. Carew, charming as she was, with all her wit, and gaiety, and good nature, was the last person

Ellen would have chosen as a confidante at such times. She would as soon have exposed her secret feelings to the sneer of a Mephistopheles, as to the laughing *persiflage* of the woman of fashion. She had lived long enough in the world to know that speech, in its gay circles, is the art of concealing, not only thought, but feeling,—that there is no solecism in fashionable breeding like breaking through the smooth, polished surface of frivolity, and startling your neighbours with a view of the deep waters beneath, which it is the whole business of their lives to conceal and forget. Accordingly, whenever those deep waters rose and swelled uncontrollably in her own bosom, she instinctively turned from the gay companions of her daily and nightly dissipation, to Louisa Conway, who, if she was sometimes more stern and uncompromising, than was quite agreeable to one used to the sweet diet of flattery, had also, as Ellen knew from long experience, an ever-ready sympathy for real feeling, and a word of consolation, of friendly counsel, for all her troubles.

“Is it you, my dear Ellen?” said Louisa, looking up, in surprise, from the book which she was intently studying, when Ellen glided, unannounced, into the room. “I thought you were going this morning, with Mrs. Carew, to Lady D——’s breakfast, at Richmond.”

“So I was—but I am sick of breakfasts and water-parties, and this perpetual round of pleasure, if pleasure it is. They are all the same, and, when the novelty is gone off, they become flat and wearisome; so I sent an excuse to Mrs. Carew, which, I have no doubt, will make her very indignant, and I am come to spend a quiet morning with you.”

"I am delighted to see you, whatever be the cause of your coming; but, pray, my dear Ellen, what has made you grow suddenly so very philosophical? Last night, when you were dancing at Lady Bolton's, you did not seem to me to think the world, by any means, wearisome or unprofitable."

"Oh, Louisa, do not you, too, laugh at me, because I feel unhappy. I came to you, because I felt unfit to mix with that gay, heartless set, who would only ridicule my feelings; and I thought you would understand me, and give me help and comfort. Do not you, too, meet with a sneer."

"A sneer, dear Ellen—surely you cannot suspect me of having intentionally hurt you. I was merely in jest—I had no idea you were unhappy. What is the matter with you?"

"Not much," said Ellen, bitterly; "not, at least, what you would think much. I had better have stayed at home. I imagined you understood me; but I was a fool for expecting it. Nobody understands me, nor ever did. You think me vain, frivolous, heartless—and Edward seems to think so, too. Oh, that I could...."

"I do not remember," said Louisa, quietly, "ever having told you that I thought you vain, or frivolous, or heartless. If I had thought so, do you suppose we should be friends as we are? and if Edward thought so, would you be his affianced wife? Ellen, Ellen, why do you allow this susceptibility of temper to deceive your better judgment to make you suspect your best friends?"

"I don't suspect them. But when I see so clearly that I am always weak and wrong, how can I help thinking that they must see it, too? How can I be-

lieve that they really love so worthless a being as I am? Yet I do believe that *you* love me, Louisa."

"And Edward!—surely you believe in his love?"

"I used to—I do still, at times; but, of late, he is altered; he does not write as he used to do; he seems to think, though he does not say so, that I am changed—that the world has changed me. Oh, how I wish I had never known this odious world! then we should never have been separated—then he would have had no fear—I should have had no doubt!"

"But why should you doubt even now? How can you doubt such a man as Mr. Annesley?"

Ellen was silent.

"Oh, Ellen!" continued Louisa, in a tone of deep emotion, "if you knew the agony of being *forced* to doubt one you loved, you would not so wantonly cast from you the blessedness of being able to trust!"

Ellen looked up at her friend.

"How selfish I have been!" exclaimed she. "Here have I been talking of my own sorrows, which are perhaps imaginary after all, whilst you have all the while been suffering a thousand times more in silence. Now do not turn away, dearest Loo. I have not been so occupied with myself as to be altogether blind to what has been going on with you. But, surely, I may ask, in my turn, why should you doubt?—why should you let the idle words of such people as Mrs. Carew and her set weigh so heavily with you?"

"It is not their words alone—there are other things," said Louisa, in a low, half-choked voice.

"But what things can weigh for a moment in the balance with his love—with your own? If he has faults, this will cover them, this will reform them.

Do not sacrifice the happiness of your life to overstrained views of duty."

"Ellen! Ellen! do not help to deceive, to mislead me. God knows I am but too willing to deceive myself; but I cannot, dare not, be blinded in such a matter as this!"

"I do not wish to blind you, only to prevent your throwing away your own happiness."

"It is better to sacrifice happiness than principle," said Louisa, almost sternly, as if she were replying to some rebellious feeling in her own heart as well as to her friend's words.

"And *his* happiness, Louisa?—have you a right to sacrifice that also?"

Louisa covered her face with her hands, and was silent for a moment.

"That thought," said she, at last, in a voice so low and hoarse that Ellen scarcely recognised its tone, "has been the bitterest of all. My own misery is nothing—but his——" She paused again, then resumed, in a firmer voice. "But I have not trifled with him—I have not deceived him as he deceived me. From the first moment of his return, I have been as frank with him as I could—he must have been long prepared for the end."

"But the blow will not fall the less crushingly when it comes."

"No, no!" said Louisa, in a tone of inexpressible bitterness, "he will feel it at the time, but the pain will pass quickly away. My only consolation is, that his nature is not one that sorrow *can* crush, and that I shall soon be forgotten."

Notwithstanding all Louisa's unselfishness, it was easy to see that there was a sting in such consolation, almost as agonizing as the grief it was meant

to alleviate. Ellen did not attempt any further persuasions. Louisa's sorrow had changed her mood, and she was now chafing in silent indignation against the man whose duplicity had been the cause of it, and whose shallow heart would speedily recover from his own wound, whilst the one he had inflicted on a far nobler and deeper nature would change the whole current of that, hitherto, unclouded life, if it dried not up the very sources of life itself.

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting," said the wise man of old; and Ellen experienced, on this occasion, the truth of the saying. She returned home with a heart as sorrowful as when she had gone forth—but it was a purer sorrow—sorrow for another, not for herself; and, as she mentally compared her own lot with her friend's, and Edward with St. John, she resolved to keep a better watch over her own feelings, and, as Louisa had bidden her, not lightly to cast from her the blessedness of being able to trust.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Sa il ciel s'io t'amo; eppur tua man refinto."

ALFIERI.

This agony

"Of passion, which afflicts my heart and soul,
May sweep imagination in its storm;
The will is firm."

SHELLEY.

The preceding conversation sufficiently shows, that Louisa's faint hope that she might have judged St. John too harshly, did not long remain to her. Each day that she met him, or heard him spoken of, added to the load which already oppressed her. They were generally little things that she heard, but, it is by slight touches only that a picture can be finished; and Louisa saw with agony how this was gradually losing all resemblance to the image which she had treasured up in her heart of hearts.

Only in love to her did St. John remain unchanged; in all else she saw him a different being from what he had been at Oaklands. The fear of the world's dread laugh was evidently before him; the tone of his conversation and sentiments was altered to suit the tastes of his hearers, and he bowed down before the world's opinions, and shocked Louisa with a subservience to its follies and fashions, and a lowering down of high principle to an inferior shrine, which to her was little less than sacrilege.

As Sir Charles Conway had said, however, no flagrant breach of this world's code of morals could be laid to his charge. His were the so-called venial faults of the man of the world, but, to the high-minded girl who loved him, such a character, when fully known, appeared in its native hideousness; and day by day, as she forced herself to contemplate it in this light, the impossibility of her uniting herself to one whose views and opinions, whose principles and faith, were so infinitely below her own, was more forcibly impressed on her mind. She must henceforth learn to root out her long-cherished affection, for he on whom she had lavished it was utterly unworthy.

Oh, the agony of that thought! with what withering effect it settles and rankles in the heart, blighting young life, and disenchanting its fairest aspect! The freshness of life is gone when we first discover that we have been deceived. We may recover from the blows inflicted by the hand of Death; loneliness, and poverty, and pining sickness, may leave our minds unclouded, but we never look upon the world again with the same feeling—we never love again as we loved before the full tide of our confidence received its first check, as when our trust in the one we loved was as entire, almost as holy, as our faith in God.

Circumstances had favoured Louisa's wish to avoid a little longer a final explanation with St. John; and since his arrival in town, she had withdrawn a great deal from Lady Catherine's parties, which she had formerly preferred to all others, but where she was certain of meeting him, and might find more difficulty in avoiding private conversation with him. He left town, however, for a

few days, and then she gladly consented to dine there with her father, and accordingly an early day was fixed.

Without possessing any peculiar talent, or even any unusual share of information, Lady Catherine St. John was generally reckoned a clever woman, and her house was one of the most *recherché* in London, perhaps on account of the difficulty of obtaining admittance to it.

Her guests were chosen, not according to their respective stations in the peerage, or on their banker's books, but for the stock of entertainment they were capable of bringing to the public fund; talent was the passport to her hospitality, and a willingness to exert that talent in society the coin in which she exacted payment. She had herself the happy art of promoting and reviving conversation, which, without some care, will so often degenerate into discussion, and the sort of intellectual duellism, which sharpens the skill of the opponents, but materially injures the peace and pleasantness of society in general.

Her parties accordingly offered something better than the frivolous interchange of gossip or unmeaning common-place, the heartless repetition of scandal, the exchange of empty civilities, and more empty demonstrations of friendship, which, in modern phraseology, we term conversation; though all the common evils of society could not be banished, they were greatly neutralised by the introduction of higher materials. In short, in her parties, the philosophic definition of man, as a rational animal, appeared a less bold and startling proposition than it usually seems to be within the precincts of the fashionable world, where

partial judge, speaking from the evidence of his senses, would frequently be tempted to exclaim, that the philosopher lied in his throat. It needs the deep searching wisdom of Professor Teufelsdröck himself to be able still to discern, that "such drawing-rooms are simply sections of infinite space, wherein so many God-created souls do for a time meet together;" more short-sighted mortals might deem it quite otherwise.

Such a house as Lady Catherine St. John's was particularly suited to Louisa's taste, and she and her father were also favourite guests there. She therefore prepared to go out on the day fixed for the dinner-party, with greater expectations of pleasure than she had experienced for some time. St. John's absence, also, strange as it may seem, was a welcome relief—an interval of rest to her overstrung nerves. There is, perhaps, no greater relaxation to the weary mind than when, after having been long agitated by feeling, and excited by being continually in the company of those whose presence moves us strongly, often painfully, we find ourselves in a society of persons, towards all of whom we are in a state of happy indifference; where all mention of more private subjects is precluded, and we are unconsciously drawn out of ourselves, and prevented from that continual returning upon the same thoughts—that perpetual chewing the cud of reflection, which, were it to last, must drive the strongest mind to madness.

This evening Ellen made the only exception to the general indifference with which Louisa regarded the party assembled at Lady Catherine's. Lady Ethelwode had sent an excuse, and Ellen was under the protection of her stately stepfather; the rest of

the party consisted of persons with whom Louisa was slightly acquainted, and of two or three noted men in the literary world, whom she was glad to meet.

The dinner went off most agreeably ; to Louisa unusually so : it was long since her mind had been so free to enjoy what was passing around her, or so fit to join in conversation ; and both her father and Ellen rejoiced to see her exert herself as of old, and, as usual, charming those with whom she conversed.

In the evening Ellen's voice was in great request ; some of the party had never heard her, and were anxious to hear whether the public rumours spoke truth of her wonderful powers. If any were incredulous at first, their incredulity soon vanished, and all were soon gathered round the piano-forte, as she good-naturedly went on, from song to song, apparently as unwearied as her auditors.

At length, however, she declared herself tired of singing alone ; none of the party came forward to relieve her, and she proposed trying some of the old English glees, of which she saw a large collection on the music-stand. The proposition was warmly agreed to, if voices enough could be found. One young lady was known to be musical, though she was afraid to venture upon a song after Ellen, but she should be glad to do her best in a glee.

"And you, Louisa, must take this low part," said Ellen. "You remember it is the one we used to sing so often at Oaklands."

"Helping you out with a song at home is a very different thing from exposing my incapacity here," said Louisa. "I assure you I never sing," she added, turning to the others.

"But there is no one else to take this part,"

cried Ellen, "and this glee is the prettiest in the whole collection. Come, Louisa, you need not call it singing, if you do not like. Just hold those two notes steady for us, and Miss Bouchier and I will sing."

Louisa laughed and attempted some further cause, but she was overruled, and at last took her seat by Ellen, saying—

"It is not worth making a fuss about, as you are so resolved; at all events, as I begin by declaring that I could not sing, my vanity cannot suffer by a failure."

The glee proceeded admirably and was loudly applauded, and another and another were proposed, as each person remembered some old favourite they wished to hear. They were in the midst of one of their merriest choruses, when the door opened and the servant announced a name which, however, was inaudible to the singers; to Louisa, as to the rest; and, as she stood with her back to the door, she could not see the new-comer, but she was not the less convinced that it was St. John who had entered the room. There is a mysterious instinct within us which seldom fails to tell us of the presence of one beloved, and which, if the outward senses be deceived or deadened, gives information as correct, as unfailing as theirs: it was thus, that, whilst she had every reason to believe St. John fifty miles off, Louisa felt, in every fibre of her frame, that it was he who was now approaching her. Her voice shook and her sight failed her. She was obliged to bend over the instrument to find her place, and it was only by a violent effort that she recovered herself sufficiently to continue singing. It seemed as if the few lines of the song had lengthened indefi-

nitely, and each note was a painful effort, while her cheeks grew crimson with the consciousness of her own uncontrollable emotion.

At length the glee was ended, and, turning round, her glance met St. John's, and sank beneath it, as he warmly pressed the hand she had almost unconsciously stretched out to him. In another moment, however, her usual cloak of reserve was resumed, and she alone remained cold and abstracted, whilst his presence seemed to inspire new life into the rest of the party: perhaps it was pique at her sudden change of manner; but he talked more gaily and carelessly than usual, and had never exerted his varied powers of pleasing to so much advantage.

It was late before the party broke up. One by one, however, they dropped off, with the exception of an old gentleman who had fastened upon St. John, and was intent upon setting him right about a certain story, of which the latter had heard a wrong version, and of a *partie carrée*, of which Sir Charles Conway was one, and which had been formed for an old friend of Lady Catherine's, with whom it was an understood thing, that, wherever he dined out, he must have his rubber of whist, and few who knew him grudged paying this tax for the pleasure of his society.

When Ellen was gone, Louisa took her seat near the whist-players, and was watching their game with apparent attention, when Lady Catherine, who was one of the party, turned round to her, saying—

“I have found those books you wished to have, my dear; and, if you will take the trouble of looking for them in the bookcase in my morning-room, you can take them home to-night.”

Louisa thanked her, and, gladly availing herself of this pretext of being for a few minutes alone, she instantly rose and proceeded to the room she had been directed to, and which opened into the back drawing-room.

She could not at once find the book, and she was kneeling down to look for them on the lower shelf, when she heard a step approach, and, starting to her feet, she saw St. John before her. She felt this was the crisis of her fate; the moment she had so anxiously, so weakly delayed. Now it must be met, and she tried to summon up all her courage, but it was a difficult task to be strong against him, when never before that night had she felt the full extent of his power over her.

"I see my presence here is unwelcome, as it has ever been of late," said St. John, in a constrained voice.

"I was startled," answered Louisa, hardly knowing what she said. "I thought you were out of town—"

"Yes; and for that reason I find you singing, the gayest of the gay, exerting yourself to please others, but turned to stone the moment I return."

"Mr. St. John!" cried Louisa, in a tone which instantly softened him.

"Oh, Louisa, is it not so? say that it is not; tell me you are not changed;—but you cannot." He continued bitterly, as he saw her face flush, whilst she continued silent. "You cannot, for you have not yet learnt to *utter* what is false."

Louisa felt the proud blood rush to her temple, as he spoke these words; and she made an attempt to speak, but she could not command her voice; and, covering her face with her hands, she leaned

back against the bookcase, for her agitation made some support necessary.

"Nay, you must, you shall speak to me now," cried St. John, irritated by her silence, and seizing her hands. They were wet with tears, and to him who had never seen her give way to emotion, this sign spoke volumes. In a softer tone he continued, whilst he gently forced her to seat herself beside him on the sofa.

"Louisa, have mercy on me, it is your pity I implore now; try me no longer; I am goaded almost to madness, and can bear it no more. Day after day have I sought this opportunity of speaking to you, and still impertinent eyes were upon us, whilst your own door has been closed against me, you best know why; but now the moment has come; we are alone, and by Heaven no power shall part us till you have told me the reason of this strange alteration! for altered you are, seek not to deny it. I am no such coxcomb, such a vain fool as to dream you had some regard for me, if you had given no grounds for such a hope. Long, long did I doubt and fear, for I loved you too well to be confident. Louisa! you *know* how I loved you; you did not need words to tell you of it, though, could I have stayed with you one short half-hour longer at that happy ball, words would not have been wanting to express what was overflowing my heart; and had I then poured out to you the full confession of my long pent-up feelings, would you have listened as you do now? Louisa, are you such a dissembler, that those looks, those tones, which sank into my inmost heart, were a sport to you, and had no meaning beyond—?"

"Spare me!" cried Louisa, in a tone in which sorrow and reproach were mingled.

"You loved me, then," he continued, gazing upon her agitated countenance; "yes, you loved me then; but I left you in sorrow; I was called away to scenes of suffering and death, and I return to find you cold and changed."

"No, no!" cried Louisa, convulsively, hardly conscious that she spoke. "What can I say to you?"

"If your heart prompts nothing, I cannot dictate the words," replied Arthur, bitterly; "but, Louisa, be to me as you were a few short months ago; force me not to curse the fate which took me from you, even to attend a father's dying wishes: be to me as you were, when then we parted, when you laid your hand in mine, and I dared entertain the hope, that when I returned I might claim it again—claim it as my own. Tell me that I did not deceive myself; oh, tell me—"

"I cannot speak," murmured Louisa; and her faltering accents proved the truth of what she said.

"Then, give me one look, dearest, and let me interpret your silence."

But Louisa's face was averted; she struggled to withdraw the hand he had seized, and was trying to collect courage to speak the few decisive words she despised herself for delaying.

"I can bear this no longer," cried St. John, his vehemence bursting forth again; "you have trifled with me too long; but now I will know the meaning of this strange conduct. I appeal to you, as you have any feeling left, to tell me the cause of your change. Have any dared to slander me?"

he continued, with increased impetuosity ; and, starting to his feet, "I will be revenged, if they have ; or, perhaps, richer and nobler suitors have found a way....."

"Stop, Mr. St. John, I will not hear another word," cried Louisa, indignantly, for his anger had hardened her, and she looked up to him proudly and stedfastly. "You have not, you dare not have entertained such a thought."

"I dared not some time ago ; I would have staked my life on your truth and disinterestedness, but now—"

Louisa pressed her hands hard to her brow, and then, with a strong effort, commanding her voice, she said,

"I will be true with you still ; you have, perhaps, a right to complain that I have indulged my weakness too long ; Mr. St. John, we must part ; the past must be forgotten ; it has been a vain dream, though once a happy one," she added, in scarce audible accents.

"Part ? Forget ? and is this to be the end of all my hopes ? and can *you* thus speak those words ? Oh, woman ! Is this thy faith, thy tenderness ? because no spoken vow binds thee, is there no other tie as strong ?"

Louisa did not answer, but her whole frame trembled violently, and she sank once more upon the sofa. Seeing her agitation, St. John's hopes revived ; he resumed his seat beside her, and took her hand, in spite of her struggle to release it.

"Louisa ! my own, my best beloved ! you try in vain to act against your own nature, for I know it is not your nature to be hard and cold as you would be to-night. I will question you no more ;

let me only forget your last words, let me feel that you will yet be mine, that you will yet crown the fondest hopes of my life—that life is yours; for your rejection, your indifference would be worse than death: turn to me, Louisa; say—”

“It cannot be!” said Louisa, in the tone of one pronouncing her own death-warrant.

“It cannot be! And who shall dare to say so? Whilst your love is mine, who shall dare to part us? But, no—I see it all—I have been deluded! You do not, you never did, love me! I have been deceived, trifled with—my hopes blighted, my love scorned!”

“Oh, Arthur!” exclaimed Louisa, in a tone which told how keen was the injustice of his accusations. That one word was enough—there were volumes of love, and sorrow, and reproach, and supplication in her half-imploring voice. Before she had time or power to resist, St. John caught her in his arms, and strained her convulsively to his heart.

For one moment Louisa forgot prudence, caution, reserve—every thing but that she loved and was beloved. She had struggled long and painfully, and now the overwearied heart yielded for once unresistingly to the full tide of passion. It was but for a moment. As she recollected herself, the deep flush of shame spread over her face, neck, and hands. She released herself hastily from his hold, saying, as she did so,—

“I have been too weak, and you have not hesitated to take advantage of it; but now I must show more courage.” Here she paused, and then proceeded again in the same tone of unnatural calmness. “I have heard you—you must now hear me. But.... I cannot speak many words—another time

you shall hear all you have a right to know; now it is enough that we must part, and that you have seen," she continued, the crimson blush overspreading her face again, "what my pride would willingly have concealed—how much this parting costs me. I never can be yours."

St. John started as though he heard her determination for the first time, and his features assumed a fierce expression which almost terrified Louisa; yet she continued, in as firm a voice as she could command,

"Another time.....my father....."

"No!" said St. John, sternly—"here, and now, and from your own lips alone will I know the reason of this, and who has dared to raise this wall between us."

"Yourself!" replied Louisa, gaining firmness as he lost his tenderness of manner—"yourself! It is I who may complain of having been deceived—trifled with; for had you really been such as you *seemed* before I came to this wretched place, we might have been happy—now it is impossible!"

"I knew I had been slandered," cried St. John, more fiercely than before, "and I will have vengeance!"

"Your vengeance can fall only on yourself—on me it falls heavily enough," added Louisa, in a lower tone, the strong tide of emotion rising almost beyond control. "With my whole heart, I pray that you may suffer less."

"But what is my crime? Am I to be condemned unheard—hastily—as you despatch a cause that is too frivolous to have any interest?"

"Not hastily—oh, not hastily—if you knew all!"

faltered Louisa. "It was long before my unwilling ears would admit aught against you—long....."

"And had you loved but half as well as I do, you could never have done so," cried Arthur, vehemently, walking up and down the room as he spoke; then, pausing before Louisa, he gazed on her, till the blood mounted again to her forehead.

"Louisa!" he continued, in a tone of deep feeling, "I did not deserve thus to be lightly cast off by you; had the whole world slandered you, I would have laughed their bitter words to scorn, and loved you still....."

She turned away from his gaze; he saw her struggle, and was about to speak again, when a step was heard in the back drawing-room, and Lady Catherine appeared at the door of the apartment.

"Did you find the books, my dear?" she said, avoiding with ready tact any notice of the evident agitation of both parties. "Oh! here they are. Our long rubber is finished at last, and your father seems to be in a hurry to go. Arthur, will you fetch Miss Conway's cloak; these rooms are so warm, that I cannot allow her to go down stairs without it." Thus, having despatched Arthur, she led Louisa back to the drawing-room, where her father was now alone.

He looked anxiously towards her. But Lady Catherine's sudden presence had enabled her to regain the calmness it was so difficult to maintain against the seduction of Arthur's tenderness, and her excessive paleness alone betokened her recent agitation.

St. John returned with the cloak, and assisted her to put it on; then, almost mechanically offering her his arm, they went down stairs. Her heart was bursting. Strongly as she had felt the necessity of

speaking decisively, to leave him in anger was almost beyond her strength. Gentle words were hovering on her lips; she longed to hear his voice again; perhaps she had heard it for the last time; she longed to see his features—it might be a farewell glance; and she looked earnestly up, as if even through the darkness those beloved features must be visible to her. Suddenly the servant turned up a lamp which had nearly been out—the glare fell full upon them, and Arthur caught her anxious, tearful gaze.

He convulsively pressed her arm, and said, in a low, hurried voice, as they passed on to the carriage,

“Louisa! I cannot, will not believe you; your heart is with me, it will plead for me, and you cannot, you dare not resist it!”

Louisa made no answer. She withdrew her arm, and, with a last effort of strength, sprang into the carriage, and sank back exhausted. Her father was by her side, but she took no notice of him; the carriage jerked violently as it drove off, but she did not seem to feel it. Sir Charles was now alarmed, and, fearing that she had fainted, he gently passed his arm round her, and, with his other hand, pushed back her hair, whilst he kissed her cold forehead, and called her by every endearing name which, from infancy, she had loved to hear. At length she opened her eyes, and gasped for breath, then threw herself on his neck, and sobbed with a violence which alarmed him even more than her previous insensibility; for when nature, like Louisa’s, is moved to tears, they are tears of agony, a strong convulsion of the soul, to which the easy weeping of softer natures is as the gentle summer shower to the burst of the winter storm.

Before they reached home, however, this first

outbreak of sorrow was over; and she lay once more motionless and silent. Her father assisted her out of the carriage, and led her to her own room. As she entered, she first woke, with a deep sigh, from the kind of stupor into which she had sunk, and, laying her hand on his arm, she said, in a low voice—

“To-morrow, dearest father, you shall know all; to-night I wish to be quiet.”

“God’s peace be with you, my child!” said her father; then, kissing her fondly, he left her to the solitude she desired.

But of what avail is solitude, or outward quiet, when the storm of passion has swept over the soul, and destroyed its inward calm? In vain is night’s deepest shadow cast over us; in vain are Nature’s most soothing scenes around us; and we gaze on the silent stars, or behold the breeze die away on the face of the waters, whose mighty anthem has sunk into a low murmur; vain is the deep solitude of the wilderness, or the stillness of the secluded cell, if passion’s withering touch has jarred the chords within, and destroyed all power in the soul of harmonising with the outer world.

And thus felt Louisa this night: her only distinct feeling on entering her room was an aching desire to be alone; all besides was a confused whirl of painful sensation. But now, that she was alone, she seemed only the more painfully to feel the agitation which shook her whole being, and mocked her efforts to calm it. The quiet soon became oppressive: the din of a crowd would have been welcome, and the busy hum of voices have sounded like music in her ears; even to hear *his* bitterest words again would be better than this silence. The

regular ticking of the clock seemed to mock her agitation; she felt too acutely—nay, she could almost hear the throbbing of her pulse and temples, as each word which had passed between her and St. John recurred to her memory. Her most painful recollection now was that she had wounded him: perhaps he was now suffering like herself. She started up at the thought—she would have flown to him; but she sank back appalled at the remembrance that she had raised an insurmountable barrier between them; that her own lips had pronounced that they must meet no more. She wondered at her barbarous folly, and longed that he could see the burning tears which were now rolling down her cheeks, and hear the altered tone in which she called upon his name, as though it were a magic spell to soothe her suffering.

In such moments as these, judgment and reason are suspended; the feelings are roused and reign alone, and fearful is their empire. But Louisa's mind was all too unused to such a yoke, to bow beneath it long; and gradually, as the night wore away, her thoughts became more collected. She blessed God, on her knees, that the temporary madness was over, and prayed, that never might that fearful storm of passion sweep over her soul again. Her grief was not less intense, but she shuddered at her late thoughts; the proud heart was humbled, self-dependence was destroyed, as she poured out her soul before a higher power: and the prayer of faith, the agonised prayer for strength against her own weakness, was answered, as the prayer of faith seldom fails to be; and she felt, at that moment, that, let the struggle or the temptation of the morrow be what it might, she had a strength beyond her own wherewith to encounter it.

CHAPTER XX.

“Once more, farewell!
Farewell!—and know, thou wrong'st me, if thou thinkest,
Ever was love or ever grief like mine.”

ADDISON'S *Cato*.

Never had St. John felt the full force of his love for Louisa as he did that night, after his suit had been so unexpectedly rejected by her. He had marked, as we have seen, her altered manner on his return, and had impatiently borne the restrictions which her reserve imposed upon their intercourse. Conscience whispered that this change might be caused by some revelations of his true character; and a few careless words, dropped by Mrs. Carew, who sarcastically complimented him on Louisa's *pruderie*, and hoped he would manage not to alarm it more than it had already been since her arrival in town, had given him sundry uncomfortable misgivings: but, secure in his own vanity, and in the consciousness of her affection, he never doubted that all her suspicions or irresolutions would vanish before his open avowal of love, as the clouds of morning disperse before the sun.

How was he then amazed when he found himself cast off, not coldly indeed, but firmly, and as the evident result of a deliberate determination! He

trembled as he thought of the calm decision which was a characteristic of Louisa's mind ; but again Hope whispered that it must fail here : all could not be at an end ; once even that night she had been overcome—she might be so again. Cold reason could not maintain its sway against his entreaties and her own heart's desire, and she would still be his. He judged her by himself—the weak follower of pleasure, the slave of his senses, how could he understand that there should be strength in a woman's spirit to resist the pleadings of her heart, and bid them be still, and die away within her, at the dictate of stern principle.

To do St. John justice, he had but too little ground, from his previous knowledge of the world, to fear that such objections as could be brought against him would seriously interfere to prevent his marriage. Had he not seen affectionate mothers striving to obtain for a young and innocent girl the hand of many a man whose golden mantle covered worse deformities than any which could attach to him ? Had he not seen fathers, honourable men, who scorned the shadow of a meanness, sell their fair child for titles and honours, and overlook the stains which polluted both ? Nay, more melancholy still, had he not seen the young, the beautiful, the seemingly pure, themselves sacrifice feeling and all young life's best hopes at the shrine of Mammon, in the belief a coronet would hide the foul blot which perjury at God's holy altar must leave upon the once guileless mind ? Had not these, and such as these, been daily incidents in the experience of the man of the world ? then why should he now despair, or think that his shortcomings would be too severely condemned before a loving judge ?

If, in very deed, she refused him, was it not rather from other motives? His embarrassments might have become known to Sir Charles, who, perhaps, favoured some other suitor, and influenced his daughter's choice. He thought over all those whom he had seen pay her any attention; one amongst them was a far more desirable match than himself—could this be the motive of her refusal? No, he felt it was impossible; nor even the whisperings of jealousy, or the pangs of wounded vanity, could shake his strong faith in her truth: his better nature was roused, and he felt in that hour of bitterness that he would rather forsake every long-cherished scheme, all his hopes of love and pride, than feel that faith shaken. So much is there still that is beautiful in the soul of man, even when debased and corrupted! so long does it take to efface entirely the impress which once stamped it divine!

After spending a miserable night, alternating between hope and despair, rage and sorrow, he impatiently counted the hours next morning till he could reasonably present himself in Berkeley Square; for he had resolved to lose no time in obtaining another interview. If he called too early, she might refuse to admit him; but then he recollected that, on the day after their first meeting, Louisa had avoided him, purposely as he thought, by going out at one o'clock, and he determined to be earlier this time. The clock struck twelve, and he could control himself no longer; and in a few minutes he was driving furiously up to Sir Charles Conway's house.

"Is Miss Conway at home?" he asked of the servant, who, to his impatience, seemed to have been an hour opening the door.

"Yes, sir—but....."

"If she is at home, show me up at once," he said, jumping out of his cabriolet as he spoke. "I must see her; she is expecting me."

"Miss Conway has not been down stairs to-day; she came home late last night, and breakfasted in her own room."

"Can I see Sir Charles, then?"

"Sir Charles went out about half an hour ago, sir."

There was nothing more to be said, and St. John drove off at the same furious rate as before, nor was it till he had nearly run against a stage-coach, and overset a whole stand of baskets at the corner of a street, that he slackened his headlong course, and paused to consider what was next to be done.

Unused to contradiction, and unskilled in self-control, his temper chafed against every obstacle till he was almost mad with irritation.

"It is all a plot against me!" he exclaimed. "They think to keep me out, to force me to silence; but I am not to be trifled with thus. That plausible, pompous old fool shall pay me for this: no doubt he has interfered; but they little know Arthur St. John, if they think he is to be made use of, and cast off at pleasure."

Other reasons besides his love also helped to goad him on. He was, as we have seen, deep in debt, and his creditors were only kept at bay by the report, industriously circulated, of his approaching marriage with an heiress. Louisa's fortune was now as necessary to save him from ruin, as she herself was to his happiness; and thus viewed in every light, the event of last night was destructive to all his hopes. For some time he tried to find solace in perpetual motion; but the mind refused to be

thus quieted, and at four o'clock he was again knocking at Sir Charles's door.

"Can I see Miss Conway now?"

"No, sir, I am sorry to say Miss Conway is not very well; she has not left her room to-day."

"Send up my card, then, and say....."

"I am sorry I must refuse, sir; but Miss Conway's maid came down only half an hour ago, to say she was to be left quite quiet; and, even if Sir Charles came in, she was not to be disturbed till she rang."

"Is she ill, then?"

"I believe she came home ill last night, sir; but she is not very bad, I should think, or Sir Charles would not have left her."

"Well, say that I have called," said St. John, turning away from the door, which seemed so resolutely closed against him; but though his impatience was no wise diminished, his anger was softened by hearing that Louisa was suffering.

"Thank heavens, she cannot make me wretched with impunity!" thought he; "and if she is ill now, she can never persist in this folly; even her father would not allow it."

But though he repeated this to himself again and again, he could not feel so well assured of it as he wished, and he could not help dreading also lest any rumour of the rupture should get abroad before he had taken means to elude his creditors.

He pondered the subject long, and at length determined on writing to Louisa; he could not wait another night, and this indisposition, whatever it might be, real, or assumed, might last for days. Having come to this determination, he returned

home immediately, and, seizing pen and paper, he rapidly poured out all, at least, all that was meet for her to know, that had been torturing him since they parted. Such a letter may be easily imagined, without our giving it here. To be eloquent on paper, when passion guides the pen, is no difficult task, and St. John's letter was, therefore, a powerful and dangerous appeal to Louisa's feelings, portraying his own sufferings, now in the tone of humble penitence, now in that of proud innocence, demanding an explanation of the reproachful words she had used the night before, conjuring her, in the most fervent language, to let affection — that affection she had confessed, and which he valued more than life and all its richest treasures — banish from her mind all doubt and mistrust, and the devotion of his whole existence should repay her for her generous confidence.

This letter found Louisa in the drawing-room, to which she had at last descended to tranquillize her father's anxiety, which had been very great the whole day. He had been engaged for a long time to dine on that day with an old friend, and Louisa was anxious that he should not break his engagement; she had, therefore, left her room late in the afternoon, to prove to him that she was quite well again, and fit to spend the evening alone. Sir Charles stayed with her till the last moment, and had just left her, with a promise that he would return early, when St. John's letter was brought in, and with it the news that he had called twice that day to see her.

All Louisa's hard won courage fled at once, and a dimness came over her eyes, as she gazed at his writing, and seemed to hear the tone of voice in which he would have pronounced each word. She

held it long in her hand ; long did she ponder every expression ; she tried to find comfort, she wished to rekindle her faith in his truth. Might not an overstrained scruple be deceiving her, to the ruin of all her happiness—of *his* happiness, also ? Was she right in the decision she had come to ? Was he not rather justified in saying that affection would more than cover all things ? All the arguments she had used before seemed annihilated ; the reasons which had urged her to this mad self-destruction seemed vain and frivolous.

She had been too hasty, too proud — was it not her great fault, and yet she had neglected to be on her guard against it. What right had she to demand perfection in another, weak and imperfect as she was herself ? Then she read his impassioned words again and again, and longed to hear his voice, to see him once more by her side. She read his humble confessions of unworthiness, his protestations that she, and she only, could lead him back to the path he had erred from, and her heart yearned towards him. Alas ! how many a woman, who would have been proof against every other appeal to her vanity, has yielded to this fallacy, and, uniting with a high self-devotedness the indulgence of her own wishes, has mistaken the dictates of passion for those of duty.

Louisa was staggered, almost overcome ; the pen was in her hand, when suddenly the memory of her earnest prayer in the hour of her greatest anguish came back to her mind, and she remembered how, after that, she had seen more clearly, and felt an unknown strength. Then putting away the tempter's words, she covered her face with her hands, to shut

out all outward objects, and commune with God and her own trembling heart.

None but those who have honestly tried it, can know the difference which this one reflection will make in the whole tenor of our thoughts, when we pause, in the midst of the confusion of self-deception and the variety and weakness of conflicting thoughts, to remember that our communings are not in secret, but that one eye sees them all. There seems at once to emanate a ray of truth from that all-seeing eye, which disperses the mists of error and passion, and sheds its pure light on the narrow path they had almost hidden. Thus it was now with Louisa; after a long, silent meditation, she again lifted her head, and the violent conflict was over—the truth lay before her, stripped of all disguise.

Passion had no longer power to conceal from her that, if she recanted the words she had already spoken, and yielded to the impetuous feelings, which pleaded loudly for her lover, she would, by uniting herself to a man, whose principles, views of life, religion, and standard of conduct, were immeasurably lower than her own, wilfully enter a path of unknown difficulty and temptation, and take a false vow at the altar—for to *honour* him was henceforth impossible.

Such was the naked, undisguised fact, and before such facts as these, a mind trained to habits of clear judgment and rigorous self-control, could see but one course to pursue. The path of duty lay plain before her—lighted from above, though stony, and full of thorns—and to see such a path, and determine to follow it, whatever might be the cost, were to her one and the same.

She now slowly picked up Arthur's letter, which had fallen to the ground, and resolved to answer it at once; she would not expose herself to the temptation of longer delay. Real consolation there was none to be looked for, however long she might wait; no alternative to be sought; delay could only renew her struggles, perhaps plunge her once more into the gulfs of self-delusion.

This resolution being formed, she at once prepared to carry it into execution. But the task was no easy one. The words which feeling prompted, reason reproved, and the expressions dictated by reason, were all too cold and heartless. At length, she resolved to confine herself to repeating the determination she had expressed the night before, and to refer him to her father for any further explanation.

But was not this laying a heavy task upon the latter? Was it not possible that they might quarrel? Sir Charles, in his uncompromising uprightness, might wound Arthur too deeply; or the latter, whose temper she had learned, of late, to know, might forget her father's age and character, and she should thus have exposed him to insult. There was no alternative; she must speak for herself. Who could deal so tenderly with the wound as she whose heart bled to inflict it, and felt doubly every pang.

Twice her letter was written, and each time she thought it too tender, or too harsh—too cold, or not sufficiently explicit; and then she began a third time, and, at length, when it was finished, in very weariness and exhaustion of spirit, she laid down her pen, and decided to send what she had written.

"It can never express all I feel," she said, with a sigh; "then this will do as well as any other;" and she proceeded to read it over before she sent it.

Poor Louisa! it was a bitter task, to read over and weigh the expression of her own sentence of misery, written in her own hand; but she was now desperately calm. She began by thanking him for his forbearance, in sparing her another personal interview—such things as she had to say were better spoken on paper. Then, gently and sorrowfully, she answered his impetuous questions, and demands for explanation, and firmly stated the ground of her refusal; but mingled with her necessary reproof no reproaches for the deceit he had practised on her, and by which he had wrecked the happiness of both. She concluded thus:

"And now, farewell—it must be said—and we must learn to bear it; but think not these, my last words, harsh or unfeeling. You have seen what, at first, my womanly pride would fain have concealed from you, all that this separation costs me; but this is no hour for pride, and now I will not seek to hide from you, that it is in agony of mind that I turn from you, to follow the course I know to be right, but which is dreary and desolate to me. Arthur, farewell! Reject not my only entreaty—let some recollection of our love come over you in the gay scenes of this hollow world, and recall you to better things! and oh! reproach me not! If ever you think of me, let it be in the same spirit in which I will daily pray for you. Once more, farewell!

"LOUISA."

This letter was sealed, directed, and given to her

own maid, to desire it might be sent immediately; though it was already late, she knew too well the horrors of suspense to prolong his misery one hour.

As the maid ran down stairs she saw one of the servants standing at the hall-door, and went up to him to give him her mistress's message, then, finding that he was speaking to a gentleman, she quickly retreated.

"To be sent to-night," said the servant, who was an old man, and did not like such unusual proceedings; "and who is it for, Mary? Why, the girl has run away and never told me, and my spectacles are down stairs. Well, Mr. Talbot, if you will walk in, and wait for Sir Charles in the drawing-room, or go up to Miss Conway, I will let her know; then I must see about this letter. Stupid girl, never to tell me where it was to go."

"I can read the direction for you, if you like," said Reginald; for it was he who had come at that unusual hour.

"Thank you, sir, I could read it myself very well, if I had my spectacles; but my eyes are not so good as they have been," said the old man, giving him the letter.

Reginald took it—it had just left Louisa's hand, and a thrill of pleasure ran through his frame. He was in no hurry to satisfy the old servant's anxiety, and he slowly, and with a strange delight, examined it, picturing to himself how Louisa had looked and moved whilst writing and folding it. Louisa so near to him, and whom he now felt almost the courage to encounter. The seal was one he had given her long ago, and which formerly never left her finger; it had then retained its place, and he was remembered, perhaps, with regret, with affec-

tion. Such a flood of tender emotion did this thought rouse up, that, when he turned to read the direction, his eyes were moist and dim, and, at first, he could barely recognise the writing—that same dear hand he had welcomed so often with rapture. But, in another moment, the words became visible, and they at once banished all his tender feelings. The truth never occurred to him; his jealous fancy could picture but one situation in which Louisa would write to St. John — she must be engaged to him, and that letter, which he held, contained the oft-repeated assurance of her affection—of that affection which he would have prized beyond all earthly blessings, but which was to bless another. The letter fell from his hand; he forgot the purpose for which he had taken it; and, without heeding the old man's questions, or his wish to know what he should say to Sir Charles, he rushed from the house.

That moment decided the fate of Reginald's future life.

CHAPTER XXI.

"To be sure, people will say that miss didn't know her own mind—but never mind that; or perhaps they may be ill-natured enough to hint that the gentleman grew tired of the lady, and forsook her—but don't let that fret you."—*The Rivals*.

It is perhaps impossible for the human mind to make such an effort as that Louisa had made, without undergoing afterwards a painful reaction. The best part of our nature may triumph; but, still, the frail tenement suffers, and bodily weakness seems, as it were, to revenge the animal man for his temporary subjection to the spiritual.

Louisa Conway proved no exception to this rule. When the struggle was over, the strength that had borne her through seemed exhausted, and for some days she was unable to make an effort to rally it; but such a state as this only lasts in proportion to the self-command of the sufferer, and Louisa soon awoke to a feeling of humiliation in giving way to it, to which was added the fear of increasing her father's already painful anxiety about her.

His tenderness seemed to have augmented tenfold in the hour of her sorrow; and, accustomed as she had been to receive marks of his unbounded, unwearying affection, from her cradle upwards, she felt that never had he been so fond, so indulgent as now. His whole time was devoted to her; and it was a beautiful thing to see the highly-gifted man,

the once eager politician, whose society was sought by all that London could boast of talent and science, forsake every thing to minister to the consolation of his suffering child, and neglect nothing which the gentlest, the tenderest of women could have suggested to pour a balm on the wounded spirit.

Nor were his efforts vain. Louisa gradually shook off the torpor which had numbed her mental faculties; and, ashamed of her temporary weakness, she resolved to struggle against it with all the strength and earnestness of which she was capable. No effort was left untried, no idle hour allowed for the dangerous indulgence of sorrow. All her former studies and occupations were resorted to with renewed diligence. She fled to them for refuge from her own thoughts, as if, by the forced employment of the mind on other things, to drive from it the one engrossing subject which had so long occupied it.

One effort, however, Louisa could not make—she could not appear again in public. She could put on a cheerful countenance to greet her father, and relieve his affectionate anxiety, but not carry the mockery of smiles into scenes from which her heart recoiled. And if it be against the decencies of custom to expose deep mourning in the assemblies of the gay and light-hearted, why should she appear there, who wore the deeper mourning of the spirit, sorrowing for all life's best hopes and joys!

Her seclusion had not, however, the effect of quieting the gossiping tongues, already busy with the story of the rupture of her marriage, which every body but the parties concerned had considered settled; and the good-natured reports which are usually afloat on such occasions were not wanting. Ellen's patience was more than once sorely tried, as

some of these reports reached her ears ; and Lady Frances Montague was mortified beyond measure at being left to gather from public rumour the history of her own niece's proceedings. It was too provoking, when she was appealed to, to be forced to confess herself as ignorant as other people ; and, to avoid any further humiliation on that score, she resolved to call in Grosvenor Square, and ascertain, without delay, the true state of the case.

"It is so annoying, when every body is asking about it," said Minna, as they drove along, "that we, her nearest relations, should not know what to answer. Depriving one of a family secret to talk about, is defrauding one of one's rightful property."

"Besides, it does not look well," said her mother, "that I should be left in such complete ignorance of the whole matter. Indeed, I never allow the fact ; it would sound very ill for the Conways, and one should be careful how one speaks of such near relations. Certainly, with her father at her elbow, I cannot say Louisa was *bound* to consult me ; but, considering how fond I have always been of her, and how much I have done for her, I think she might have shown a little more deference to my opinion. However, I do not blame her, poor child ! She has been so strangely brought up, that one cannot wonder at any thing she does. And you should be indulgent towards her, Minna, for the same reason."

"Oh ! certainly, mamma," said Minna, fearful lest her mother should launch forth on her favourite topic of hers and Fanny's superior education, and the advantages they had derived from having such a devoted mother.

They found Louisa at her easel ; her father was

reading to her, and neither of them looked much pleased at the interruption. However, Sir Charles received them with his usual courtesy, and Louisa resigned herself, with as good a grace as she could, to listen to Minna, comforting herself with the reflection that she would not be required to talk much.

But Minna was come on an inquisitorial mission, and she was bent on accomplishing it. She tried several subjects, with a view of drawing Louisa from her defence of silence and reserve; but, finding that they were unavailing, she resolved boldly to come to the point at once.

"By the way, Louisa," said she, "have you banished Mr. St. John altogether? It is rather cruel of you not to allow him even to remain in England?"

"What do you mean?" asked Louisa, calmly, although a flush passed over her pale cheek.

"Now, Louisa, pray do not pretend ignorance, when it is you—if report speaks truth, at least—that have driven him from the country."

"I wish report would not meddle with my name; or, at all events, that those who call themselves friends would not borrow her false trumpet."

"Well, you know best the reason; but Mr. St. John is gone abroad"—Louisa involuntarily started—"and I thought you might be able to tell me when he is to return."

"I am unacquainted with Mr. St. John's movements; but, if you are anxious about them, you had better apply to his aunt, Lady Catherine, who will no doubt be able to satisfy you better."

"Oh! my dear Louisa, you need not take it *sur ce tou-là*, and look so very stately and dignified. I am not going to preach to you like mamma, for I

am rather glad, on the whole, that you are not going to marry Mr. St. John" (Louisa winced), "if it were only for the sake of your consistency. You know you were angry with me long ago at Oaklands for hinting at the possibility of such a thing, and now I see I was wrong; but, really, like many other people, I was so thoroughly taken in...."

Louisa flushed scarlet, and bit her lips to refrain herself from showing either her emotion or her anger. As she remained silent, Minna continued, fixing her eyes on her face—

"To be sure, then, nobody knew that Mr. St. John was overburdened with debt. It would certainly have been very unwise to marry a man who has nothing but prospects to live upon. Lord Baltimore is a much better *parti* in every way, though I confess I did not suspect you of so much worldly wisdom on this subject."

"Minna!" exclaimed Louisa, with a flashing glance, which, for a moment, made her tormentor shrink beneath it, "you are mad, or worse, or you would not dare speak thus. This subject must never be mentioned again between us," added she, in a lower voice; and the violent effort she made to control her feelings must have touched any heart but her cousin's.

Minna probably possessed an organ through which the blood circulated to her veins, but to call it a *heart* in any other than anatomical language, would be a misnomer; even she, however, was sufficiently awed by the presence of a mind so much nobler and stronger than her own, as to respect Louisa's prohibition, and she did not again mention St. John's name.

Whilst this agreeable colloquy had been going

on between the cousins, Lady Frances had led Sir Charles into the back drawing-room, and there, in a tone of deep sympathy, had begun to question him upon this strange rupture between his daughter and Mr. St. John, of which, she said, all the world was talking, and making such disagreeable comments, that it quite grieved her to hear her poor dear sister's child so spoken of.

"I really ought to have it in my power to contradict them, my dear Sir Charles. So tell me what you would wish me to say."

"Nothing," replied her brother-in-law, quietly.

"Nothing! you forget what a disagreeable position you place me in."

"Then, if you must notice the impertinent remarks of people whose opinion ought to be as indifferent to you as they are to me," replied Sir Charles, for once roused from his usual mildness by the thought of any one reflecting on his child, "tell them, that Louisa Conway is above their slander, as she is above their praise; that she acts by principles which they disregard, and from motives they could not understand."

"My dear brother, you know such a speech as that would merely be ridiculed."

"I do know it, and therefore I do not wish you to speak at all."

"I perceive you are vexed about this business, as indeed it is natural you should be. Now, do tell me, *entre nous*, how it happened; how you could allow Louisa to throw away such a match?"

"If I am vexed, my dear Lady Frances," said Sir Charles, who had by this time recovered his usual serenity of demeanour, "it is only at the world's, and worse still, would-be friends' imperti-

nent meddling. I cannot be either vexed or surprised by my child's actions. She has acted with my entire approbation."

"Indeed! Yet Mr. St. John, as your heir, you know, was a very good marriage for Louisa, considering how much men look to money and beauty in these days. To be sure, he has very little now, and is deep in debt, I hear, but I should not have thought that would have weighed so much with you, as they could have lived with you till he got out of his difficulties. I assure you the affair does not look well; *his* friends say that he withdrew first, and other people are good-natured enough to hint that she jilted him, and that you know is a terrible thing to be said of a girl. Nobody will believe there is no other reason for breaking it off than mere objections to his character—there are such slight grounds on that score for so decided a measure. I cannot tell you how all this vexes me, and I am afraid it will do serious injury to Louisa; she is not handsome, you know, which men think of much more than all her talent and strength of character; and she may not have another opportunity of marrying so well."

It was with difficulty that Sir Charles could command his impatience sufficiently to answer his sister-in-law calmly.

"I am half inclined to rejoice," said he, "in Louisa's want of beauty, if it secures her from the attentions of men who look no further than a pretty face. Louisa will marry or not, as it may happen; but, thank Heaven, she has loftiness of mind sufficient to prevent her marrying a man whom she could not esteem, for fear no other chance of marriage should afterwards offer. Let

us drop the subject, my dear Lady Frances," he continued, in a calmer tone; "from her childhood we have never agreed about Louisa, nor are we likely to do so now. You disapproved of my system of education; no wonder that you disapprove of the result."

So saying, he led the way back into the other room, where he saw at a glance that Louisa's *tête-à-tête* with her cousin had not been more agreeable than his with Lady Frances.

"Well, Minna," said the latter, "we must be going. I am afraid we cannot be of any more use by staying here, and I have several visits to pay."

"Have you asked my uncle about Mr. Talbot, mamma?" exclaimed Minna, as they were preparing to take leave.

"Oh, no! I had quite forgotten it; I have been so taken up—so grieved by all this business. What appointment is it, Sir Charles, that Reginald Talbot has received? I heard he had got something, from Mr. Harding, who told me he was going abroad."

"Going abroad!" exclaimed Louisa and her father at the same moment; "we have not heard of it."

"Really!" said Lady Frances, delighted to find herself of some importance at last, from having something to tell; "I assure you Mr. Harding spoke of it as a settled thing, and asked me how you approved of it."

"And do you not know what appointment it is?"

"I could not exactly make out; but Mr. Harding said, young Talbot would have an opportunity of distinguishing himself."

"That I have no doubt of, wherever he may go," said Sir Charles. "I have not seen Talbot for some time; I suppose this is a very sudden thing, and he has not had time to tell me about it."

Unwilling that any one should see how much he felt the extraordinary neglect of his former ward, Sir Charles turned it off lightly, and, after a few more words, the Montagues departed.

When they were gone, however, he expressed his astonishment to Louisa, at the news they had brought. What could be the meaning of this sudden change in Reginald's plans, without his being even apprised of it? Next month, the election Reginald had been so anxious about was coming on, and he was going to leave England!

Since Louisa's hurried meeting with him at the exhibition, and her subsequent explanation of the cause of his sudden disappearance from Oaklands, Sir Charles had called upon him, but had not found him at home; and, seeing that he no longer used his old privilege of dining with them whenever he pleased, he had that day, when writing to him about the approaching election, sent him an invitation. This had not hitherto been answered; perhaps then he would come: but Sir Charles was now really anxious about him, and he resolved immediately to go and find out the truth of this strange report.

He proceeded accordingly to Reginald's lodgings, but he was out. He discovered, however, from the servant, that Lady Frances's account was perfectly true.

"Mr. Talbot," he said, "had packed up every thing, and was merely waiting for final orders."

Sir Charles requested leave to go up and write a note, and was immediately shown into Reginald's

room. Here he felt it more and more difficult to believe that he was changed in feeling towards his old friend. Different sketches of Oaklands, most of them by Louisa, which had evidently been the only ornaments of the apartment, were now lying about, ready to be packed up. One little sketch of Louisa, at her easel, done the year before by her master, at Reginald's request, and which Sir Charles now remembered his being very anxious about, was there also, carefully framed, and lying by the side of his writing-case, looking like the familiar thing of daily use, which could not be parted with till the last moment. An envelope was on the table, directed to Sir Charles, of which the contents had evidently been burned, and another fragment of a sheet on which the first words, "My dear Sir Charles," attracted the attention of the latter, proved that Reginald had, at least, intended imparting his plans to him.

Sir Charles sat down immediately to write a note, expressing his surprise at his change of plans, and at his silence concerning it, but avoiding any mention of his own hurt feelings at finding himself left to discover from strangers what interested him so deeply. Reginald's actions, of late, had been evidently those of a spirit ill at ease, and Sir Charles would not have added a feather's weight to the burthen. His note was, therefore, kind and affectionate, and concluded with a pressing invitation to dine with him that day, adding that Louisa was as anxious to see him as he was himself. This note was sealed, and placed where Reginald would be most sure to see it, and Sir Charles left the house.

He was walking thoughtfully along, pondering on the possible causes of Reginald's estra-

when a carriage drove past ; and the lady who occupied it kissed her hand to him. He did not distinctly see who it was till the carriage stopped ; and he perceived Lady Catherine St. John beckoning to him to come and speak to her. He quickened his pace, and, as soon as he reached the carriage, she said :—

“ Pray, get in ; I want very much to speak to you : I can take you home.”

Sir Charles had no excuse to offer ; though, dreading the subject of conversation most likely to be introduced, he would gladly have avoided this interview. With the best grace he could assume, he took his seat beside Lady Catherine, and the carriage drove on.

“ I intended to have called at your house,” said she, “ but then I thought that very likely you would be out, and Louisa might not wish to see me ; so I gave up my intention, and proposed writing to ask you to come to me, but this meeting will save you the trouble.”

“ I should have been most happy to wait upon you. But what is the matter ?”

“ Oh ! that you must know as well as I do,” said Lady Catherine, “ so that I may spare myself the trouble of stating it. I have promised to speak to you on behalf of poor Arthur, who really is almost frantic.”

“ I heard he was gone abroad.”

“ He is,” said Lady Catherine ; “ but he left his cause in my hands. It was a long time before I would undertake to plead it ; for really, in former times, I must own I did not altogether approve of his—of some of his ways ; but the genuine feeling he has shown, on this occasion, has won my heart.

I did not believe that a man of such — in short, a man of the world, could have been so completely and honestly in love as Arthur is with your daughter, or that he could have felt any blow of this kind so acutely as he has done."

"I truly grieve that he is so unhappy, or rather, perhaps, any friend of his should rejoice, as it shows that all seeds of good are not eradicated from his heart."

"You judge him harshly."

"No; at least, it is far from my intention so to judge any one: but, I honestly own, I think almost any individual action, however reprehensible, would speak less against the character of a man than the habits of dissimulation, which could enable him to wear a mask so long as he did, adopting opinions and pursuits entirely at variance with the usual tenor of his life."

"But do you not think the influence which Louisa exercised over him enough to account for it."

"I am willing to believe that it does account for it, in part. Had there been no genuine feeling, we could not have been so easily deceived. But how then could he so quickly return to meaner things? how could he so lightly cast off that influence as to turn away dishonourably from his father's creditors the moment he had left her, whilst he knew that in doing so he was acting in opposition to all her feelings and principles?"

"But you know, my dear Sir Charles, neither his father's debts, nor his own, contracted under age, and which his father never paid, could be legally claimed from him."

"No; nor is the dry letter of the law the code

for a man of honour ; therein lies the impossibility of his marriage with Louisa. He could not have raised his standard of action to hers ; and God forbid that she should have lowered hers to his ! But while I excuse him, do not think that I exonerate myself. Bitterly do I reproach myself for having allowed his intimacy with my daughter. I used my penetration to the utmost ; but I should have done more ; I should have left no inquiry unmade before I ventured to risk my child's happiness. I allowed myself to be blinded by his many brilliant qualities of mind ; and when I thought of the many advantages of the match for her, I rejoiced to see their attachment. I am now bitterly punished for my rashness."

"But if she really cares for him," objected Lady Catherine, "why so decidedly close the matter? Surely she would overlook some faults ; we all have had to do so ; and if she is attached to him, she must be making herself miserable as well as him. It might have been better, had they never become acquainted ; but as it is, and since he was able to win her affections....."

"I fear as long as human nature remains such as it is," replied Sir Charles, "the firmest principle and the utmost care will not preserve the heart from the inroads of passion, but they can prevent the evil being followed out into action. Louisa, with all her superiority, has given her affection to one who is unworthy of it ; but would you have her follow up one weakness by another, and, because she has taken one false step, go recklessly on, instead of turning back at the expense even of much misery and much abuse?" he added

bitterly, "for I hear that this unfortunate business is in every body's mouth."

"Some people will always talk; but as for that, we must bear patiently what we cannot prevent. No, I would not have our dear Louisa sacrifice herself to the prejudice of the world. I would only have her really consult her own happiness."

"But we must first determine where that happiness is to be found. Is it merely in avoiding present pain by pursuing our own inclinations, or is it in following loftier principles, and trusting in faith to find peace therein?"

"I know Louisa's high-mindedness. . . ."

"Then if you really know her, can you think that she could be happy if, in her marriage, the first duty of a wife, that of paying reverence to her husband, was impossible? And is St. John a man to be revered and honoured by a highminded woman?"

"Have you, then, no opinion of the influence such a mind as Louisa's would exercise over her husband?"

"The highest, on the contrary; but I think that if a woman marries with the intention of influencing and controlling her husband, she leaves the path assigned to her by Heaven, and courts dangers and responsibilities which her natural station does not impose upon her; and she therefore tempts Providence, who assigns to each his burden."

"I acknowledge the truth of your argument," said Lady Catherine, with a sigh, for she herself had married a man inferior to her in talent and principle, and had chafed in vain during the best years of her life against the degrading bondage; "and I fear I must relinquish my suit. It was against my better judgment that I undertook it,

for, from the first, I felt Louisa was right. My only doubt was, whether she had strength to go through with her task. It is but justice, however, to Arthur to say, that his faults belong as much to his class as to his individual character: the world would not judge him severely, but I dare not urge that plea to you. I feel that, educated as Louisa has been, she cannot—and God forbid that she should!—judge as the world does of its favourites. I grieve for poor Arthur; yet, far from wishing to make your child sacrifice her principles to him, I would desire to see more women act as she has done; for I have long felt convinced, that if the pure-minded amongst us required equal purity of character in the men they married, we should not see such a state of society as ours, nor so many unhappy marriages wearing away the lives of their victims. I believe this truth cannot be too loudly preached, that purity and delicacy of mind in women are vain as to their effects on men, so long as they consent to sacrifice them in marriage. Tell dear Louisa, that, much as I must feel for Arthur, her conduct in this instance has heightened my regard for her.”

“I will give your kind message to Louisa, and I am sure she will be glad to see you before we leave town, which will be very shortly; but I must request you not to mention this subject to her. She has acted a noble part, but the struggle has been a violent one. Thank God she had strength to conquer! for had I seen her unable to bear it, it would have been a sore trial to my fortitude to have been forced to interfere.”

The carriage was by this time in Grosvenor

Square, and Sir Charles, shaking hands cordially with Lady Catherine, alighted at his own door.

He had not been in very long, when a note was brought to him—it was from Reginald. But, though pleased at receiving this speedy answer, Sir Charles's anxiety was little relieved by the tone of his communication.

He began by thanking him for his kind note, which, he said, was a cutting reproach to him for his late neglect; but there were reasons for it which, if Sir Charles could know, he would not, perhaps, blame him so severely as he now had a right to do. As to his change of plans, he had much also as regarded them for which to excuse himself to his kind friend. The change had been sudden; his present appointment of secretary to the new ambassador at M—— was offered to him very unexpectedly, and only a few hours were allowed him to make his decision. He had then attempted to see Sir Charles, but it was late, and he was not at home. Circumstances had since decided his choice, and he relinquished with grief the new and brighter prospect Sir Charles's kindness had opened to him. He must leave England, and it was the feeling of this painful necessity which had rendered it impossible to him to write and acquaint his friend with his resolution; and now, after having had only a few days for preparation, he was forced to leave town that night. The ship which was ordered to take him and his *chef* out to their destination, was to sail from Portsmouth with the first fair wind, and he could not, therefore, see either Sir Charles or Louisa before he departed. "Perhaps, however," he concluded, "it is well that we should not meet. I require to be har-

dened now, not to be reminded of all I leave behind; but we shall meet again, I trust. The day may come when I may once more claim your affection. I pray that happiness may still dwell under your roof, though I share in it no longer. I must close this hurried note. May God in heaven watch over you and yours, my dearest, kindest friend!

“Ever yours,

“REGINALD TALBOT.”

The incoherent tone of this note grieved Sir Charles more than he chose to say, and he, therefore, put it in his pocket without showing it to Louisa; and when he went to dress, he sent for the servant to inquire particularly when Reginald had called.

“Oh yes, sir, Mr. Talbot called one evening, but as he left no message and no card, I did not remember to mention it.”

“Was not Miss Conway at home?”

“Yes, sir, and I asked Mr. Talbot to go up stairs, but something put him out all of a sudden, and he went off without saying a word.”

“Cannot you recollect what it was that put him out?”

“Oh yes, now I remember, sir,” said the old man. “I asked him to read the direction of a letter Miss Conway has just sent down stairs—for Mr. St. John, I think; and then, without telling me or anything, he just looked at it, and then threw it away, and darted off. I know I was obliged to go and ask John to read it afterwards, and we found Miss Conway had forgotten to put the number.”

"Very well, you may go," said Sir Charles.

The suspicion, which had more than once flashed across his mind, was now established beyond a doubt. Reginald loved his early playfellow, and jealousy was the cause of his estrangement, and his violent conduct at Oaklands. Sir Charles sighed as this became clear to his mind.

"Oh why," thought he, "did St. John ever cross their path? How happy might they have been together—my two noble children! Better that she should have struggled through the world with him, than have lived in splendour with Arthur. But her heart is given—and Reginald is an exile."

When he returned to the drawing-room, he acquainted Louisa with the substance of Reginald's note, and, knowing she had reproached herself much already on his account, he expressed no regret at his change of plans, but rather expatiated on the advantages of his appointment, and the hopes of his distinguishing himself, and becoming known to the government. He then told her that he had now no object in remaining in town any longer, and he was ready to leave it with her, whenever she liked.

"But the business you have been so anxious about?" objected Louisa, "how can you leave it?"

"I can trust it now to other hands. My business is with you, my child, and to see the colour return to your cheeks, and your mind recover its wonted energy, I would sacrifice every other interest. But in this case I shall really sacrifice nothing, for I have been wanted on my Derbyshire property for a long time, and I propose that we should go there; that beautiful country is unknown to you, and the change will do you good."

Louisa's colour came and went. The idea of the country brought Oaklands to her mind. She had thought of returning there, yet dreaded the thousand recollections associated with it, and which would be a dangerous trial to her fortitude; and now she hardly knew whether to grieve or rejoice, that her steps were to be turned another way. The plea of business which her father had made precluded all objections, however, and thus Sir Charles saved her and himself any discussion upon a subject which might awaken painful feelings.

A few days after, having taken an affectionate leave of Ellen, and forced herself to see Lady Catherine St. John, for a few minutes, Louisa gladly turned her back upon the gay metropolis, which had been to her such a theatre of uninterrupted suffering.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ Compassionates my pains and pities me !
What is compassion when 'tis void of love ?

————— Compassionates my pains ?
To one that asks the warm return of love,
Compassion's cruelty—'tis scorn—'tis death !”
Cato.

Ellen's resolution of resting in undoubting faith on her lover, was soon tried far more sorely than it had ever been, or than she had ever dreamt of. Hitherto, whatsoever mist of doubt had arisen between them, had arisen from her own jealous and self-torturing spirit ; but now, no day passed but that Mademoiselle Juliani, or Lord Caldwell, who was a more frequent visitor than ever, found means to make before her some passing allusion, some obscure insinuations concerning Edward, which, though apparently unintentional, carried each a sting ; which, like the pricks of the Indian fig, were, from their very insignificance, less carefully guarded against, and more difficult to extricate after once they had entered.

They were “ trifles, light as air.” Ellen thought so—said so to herself—and often, for the time, they remained unheeded ; but not the less certainly had they sunk into her heart ; and rankled there, gradually spreading wider and wider the,

imperceptible sore. She was not aware herself, so subtilly and gradually was the poison instilled, how powerful were its effects; and her struggle against it was, therefore, the less energetic. Still she did struggle, and at times the dear undoubting faith of her early love came back like sunshine over her troubled soul. A letter from Edward—a temporary absence from her tormentors—the recollection of what had been, which often came back upon her in those still faithfully-kept watchings of the sunset; recollections of Edward's truth and nobleness, and steadfastness in well-doing, which had first made him the idol of her unconscious worship, would suffice to do this; and, for the time, love and faith resumed their sway, and were, as they ever must be, triumphant over all the lower passions raised up against them.

Had her intercourse with Louisa been as constant as it used to be, much of the evil which surrounded her would have been averted; Louisa's strong, clear mind would have discerned the snare which was laid for her, and would probably have saved her from falling into it; but Louisa's whole heart and soul were too painfully engrossed at this time with her own feelings, to see what was passing elsewhere; and, as she had gradually withdrawn more and more from the world, as Ellen, driven on by her internal restlessness, plunged more eagerly into its vortex, the friends met but rarely, and scarcely ever, except in public, where all more intimate subjects of conversation were forbidden. Ellen was, therefore, left to wrestle alone against her enemies without, and the still worse enemy within; and Lord Caldwell, who watched, with the keen glance of a serpent, the struggles of his

victim, soon perceived that they were daily becoming weaker.

An accidental circumstance brought matters to a crisis. One day—it was, unfortunately, the very day after the Conways left town—Lady Ethelwode happened to mention a story which Lady Frances had told her the evening before, concerning the robbery of some valuable jewels which had occurred several months ago, and at the time had caused a great stir. Every attempt to discover the thief had been unavailing, and the event had remained shrouded in mystery, till a few days ago, when a man, who was lying dangerously ill in the fever hospital, confessed to the theft, in his delirium, and told the place where the jewels had been concealed: on search being made, they had been found there, and the whole circumstance brought to light.

“Ah,” said Mademoiselle Juliani, laughing, when Lady Ethelwode had finished her story, “that delirium is a very dangerous thing; all one’s secrets come out, in spite of oneself. I remember, for instance, when you were so ill, last autumn, Miss Percival, in your delirium, you used to call on Mr. Annesley’s name, and say all kinds of extravagances about him.”

“Did I?” said Ellen, blushing; “but how could you have heard me, Mademoiselle? for afterwards, Louisa expressly told me, that she and the nurse, who was a stranger, were the only people with me at those times.”

“That is very true; but you often spoke so loud, that your voice could be heard in the garden, outside your window, especially as you know the window was generally left open, because of +1

heat. I was not the only person who heard you," continued she, with a malicious smile, "for several times, when I was walking in the garden, quite late, I saw Mr. Annesley there, too, though he did not see me, and he must have heard you speaking of him, and raving about him, as distinctly as I did. I remember once, as I passed by, hearing him say, 'Poor thing, poor thing! she shall not suffer if I can help it,' or words to that effect; and I foresaw then what would happen—that he would propose as soon as you got well."

Carelessly, without apparent intention, as if in good-humoured jesting, had these words been spoken, but each one fell with deadly aim on Ellen's already smarting wound. She did not speak; the tumult of her thoughts and feelings choked her; and it was not for several minutes that she recovered sufficient strength to rise from her seat, and leave the room. It was with difficulty she reached her own. She locked the door as she entered, lest her tormentor should pursue her; and then, throwing herself on the sofa, the swelling torrent of grief burst forth with fearful and uncontrollable violence.

"And is it then all come to this?" exclaimed she, aloud, as if utterance were a needful vent to the overburthened heart. "Have I been throughout so blind, so deluded, so duped, as to take pity—cold, degrading, contemptuous pity—for love? Fool, fool that I have been!" and as she spoke, she pressed her hands to her forehead, with such force, that the impression of her fingers remained on the marble skin.

"And I—I have given him all—heart, soul, existence; I have worshipped him as I never wor-

shipped God, and he has, in return, given me *pity*! My God, my God, let me not go mad!" She buried her face in the cushions, and groaned aloud, in her agony of spirit.

It was long before, in that dark chaos of grief, any thought, but that of her misery, pictured itself distinctly. Once, as she raised her head, she saw the red sunlight gleaming on the opposite windows; and her last walk with Edward, his earnest entreaties not to let any thing shake her trust in him, flashed back on her memory, like a gleam of hope over the troubled waters; and, for a moment, she felt that she might be deceived, but the next, the dark storm swept over her again. It was all too clear, too evident; Edward's constant calmness of manner, his immoveable firmness, his self-control—all were proofs that he did not love her—that he never had loved her; and, with a crushed spirit, she turned from that glorious light, and lay no longer convulsively weeping, but motionless, tearless, and with a confused consciousness, that to her there was no longer any sun in the universe.

At length, a change came over her spirit—a mood of proud resolve; now, that the truth was made clear, she felt that all must be at an end for ever between her and Edward. It was humiliation enough to have been offered his hand from pity; to accept it now, that she knew the feeling that prompted him, would be a worse, because a voluntary degradation; she determined at once to break the tie that bound them.

"I will write to him now—this very night—this moment," muttered she, as if fearful that an in-

stant's delay would leave her no strength to accomplish her purpose.

She rose from the sofa, pushed back from her face the long hair saturated with tears, and sat down to her desk; but her dimmed eyes could not see in the twilight to form the characters, and she was obliged to lay down her pen, and ring for a light. Mademoiselle Juliani, who had been anxiously expecting her re-appearance to judge of the effect of her words, heard the bell, and followed the maid into the room. She started as the light fell on Ellen's face; it scarcely seemed the same she had seen three hours before, and she hurried away, for she had not courage to look again on the work she had done. The maid, who was attached to Ellen, was horror-struck too, and anxiously inquired if her mistress were ill.

"No, no, I am not ill, I am perfectly well," said Ellen, with tremulous lips. "Thank you, that will do, Mary; you need not stay."

Mary was obliged to go, and Ellen was once more left alone. With a trembling hand she seized a pen, and wrote the following letter, in scarcely legible characters.

"I now know the whole truth; how, or by whom revealed to me, matters not; suffice it to say, that I am now aware that pity, not love, is the feeling that has prompted all your conduct towards me; and, being aware of it, of course, all that passed between us, whilst I was under a delusion, must be cancelled. I release you from your engagement, the voluntary and heavy yoke your pity induced you to impose on yourself; you are once more free—free to bestow your affections on any other more worthy of them than myself. I thank you for your

generous compassion, though it had, perhaps, been more merciful not to have created a delusion, which must, sooner or later, be dispelled ; and all the more cruelly for having been so long believed as truth ; more generous not to have deceived me, not to have thought cold pity a sufficient return for the gift of my whole heart ; but enough of this : doubtless your motive was kind, and I will not embitter these last words with unavailing reproaches. Farewell ! farewell, *for ever* ! Forget the existence of one, whose bitterest feeling is, that she should so long have been a burden to you. May God bless you, Edward ; may He for ever bless you, and be more merciful to you, than you have been to me ! Once more, farewell.

“ ELLEN PERCIVAL.”

The paper was blistered over with tears, and Ellen was on the point of writing her letter over again, lest Edward should perceive these marks of weakness, and again pity her. The thought of his pity, now, was like burning fire. But the sound of the postman's bell, in the street, prevented her executing her intention. She hurriedly folded and sealed it, without reading it over—wrote the direction, which another large tear nearly obliterated—then, removing the candle, so that her face could not be seen, she rang the bell and sent her letter to the post.

Mademoiselle Juliani, who took care to be in the way, caught a glimpse of the direction as Mary took it down stairs. She at once guessed its purport, and forthwith despatched a note to Lord Caldwell, to inform him of the result of her ingenious device and her conjectures, which 31

almost to certainty, concerning the letter. She eagerly watched for Ellen's appearance at dinner, as she thought she should be able to read the whole truth from her countenance and manner. But Ellen came down no more that evening; she sent word that she had gone to bed with a violent headache, which was the truth. But what was the bodily pain, however great, to the racking torture of the mind during that long, sleepless night, whose darkness and stillness shut out every exterior object, and left it to prey upon itself undisturbed?—In that one night Ellen lived through years of misery. The freshness of feeling—the childlike trust—the buoyant hope of youth departed from her for ever. The bloom of life had been washed away by those scalding tears.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“And thou, without one pensive memory
Of this my life, without the slightest sign
Of pity for my pangs, dost thou consign
To the stray winds, ungrateful, every tie
Of love and faith, which thou didst vow should be
Locked in thy soul eternally for me?”

Garcilasso de la Vega.

Ellen's letter reached Edward as he was sitting at breakfast the next morning with Mrs. Allen. His suppressed exclamation, and the sudden paleness which overspread his countenance as he read it, were remarked by his grandmother, and she anxiously inquired whether he had received any bad news. Edward silently held out the letter, then, covering his face with his hands, he sat motionless, striving to master the tumultuous and conflicting feelings which struggled fiercely in his heart.

“What can this mean, Edward?” said Mrs. Allen, as she returned him the letter.

“There has been foul play, somewhere,” answered he, speaking with difficulty. “Some one has deceived her, to induce her to break off our engagement, and she has fallen into the snare.”

“But what will you do?”

“Go to town, instantly. I must see her—a few spoken words will do more to convince her of the truth than written volumes. Besides, she must

need protection; for those who have deceived her so infamously must have done it for some base purposes of their own. The London coach passes the door in half an hour—that will be time enough for the preparations I have to make.”

“But, Edward, my dear boy, I cannot bear to remind you of it—but, to-morrow is Sunday.—Your grandfather is utterly unable to do the duty; what can be done?”

In the tumult of the moment, Edward had wholly forgotten this. Unless he could find some one else to take his place on the morrow, it would be impossible for him to go. He instantly mounted his horse and rode off, to request the assistance of one or the other of the only two clergymen within reach. Both, however, were engaged; and, after a long and fruitless ride, Annesley returned home, disappointed and heavy at heart, only in time to write a hurried letter to Ellen, telling her that she had been grossly deceived, and entreating her to suspend all further judgment on his conduct till she saw him, which would be on the Monday, as he intended leaving Ethelwode by the Sunday evening mail.

There was no post that night, and he was therefore obliged to send his letter by the coach, and he again mounted his horse to take it himself to H—, from whence the coach started. It was some relief to his mind to see the coach fairly gone, and to reflect, that, in a few hours, his letter would be in Ellen's hands. He knew her enough to feel assured that she must have suffered bitterly before she wrote that letter, even had not the blistered paper, the tremulous and scarcely legible hand-writing, borne witness to her state of mind when she wrote it.

"My own poor Ellen!" thought he, as his heart rose in burning indignation against those who had brought this sorrow upon her.

It cost Edward a long and hard struggle before he could regain the calmness of mind necessary for the solemn duties of the next day. It was not with a heart full of burning anger, with a curse trembling on his lips, that he could enter the House of God, and take upon himself the highest, holiest office appointed to man; and many hours of self-conflict, of intense prayer, were needed before he could feel that he might utter, without falsehood, the words "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

"I wish I could have saved you this, my dear boy," said Mr. Allen, as Edward entered his room, to which he was now wholly confined, a little before church time; "if I could by any means have crawled to church, I would not have allowed you to remain here, when your presence is so much needed elsewhere. But my day of labour and usefulness is over," added the old man, sorrowfully.

"It is, perhaps, better as it is, father," said Edward. "The duty of to-day will fit me for the duty of to-morrow, and by this time I hope my letter must have put an end to all further mischief."

"God grant it may be so!" said Mr. Allen to his wife, as Edward left the room; "but, if Ellen had been worthy of him, if she had been capable of understanding his character, no power of man or devil could have shaken her belief in his truth; and, if she be not, is it not better that he should suffer some pain now, than that his whole future life should be blighted by a wife unworthy of him?"

"It is hard to tell," said Mrs. Allen, sighing; "but, thank Heaven, the decision is in higher hands than ours! Let us hope that all will end well. We know that all *must* end well in the higher sense of the word with Edward; for, do not all things work together for good to the good?" And, having, as was her wont, left a word of hope and consolation behind her, the good old lady left the room, to accompany her grandson to church.

As soon as the last service was over, Edward mounted his horse, much to the astonishment of his parishioners, who had never seen him do such a thing on a Sunday evening before, and rode off to catch the mail, which passed through the post-town, some miles from Ethelwode. He had time enough, during the long and weary hours of his night journey, to revolve the plan of action he meant to pursue. He felt assured that a very few words would suffice to undeceive Ellen. She must see, feel the truth at once, when he was there to assure her of it; she could not doubt his love in his presence. That hers was as strong as ever, that his secret enemies, though they had succeeded in weakening her trust, had wholly failed in weakening her affection, was clear from every word of her letter, and, since this was so, he resolved to avoid all future misunderstanding, by urging once more their immediate union.

As he pondered on this resolution, he reflected anxiously that those who had not scrupled to deceive Ellen, with the intention of separating her from him, would, undoubtedly, oppose to the utmost a union which must at once, and for ever, defeat all their machinations. He could not even imagine who his enemies were, although involuntarily his suspicions rested on Lord Caldwell. He

must wait to unravel the mystery, till he could see Ellen, and to wait, at that time, was the hardest trial of all.

When he arrived in town, it was yet too early to call in Piccadilly. He knew that at that hour he should not find even the servants stirring. He directed his steps, therefore, to an hotel, anxious and harassed in mind, and weary in body, for his usual sedentary habits little fitted him for the continual exertion of the last two days. The forced rest he was now obliged to take was of real service to him, much as he had chafed against the delay it occasioned, and he went forth afterwards with his usual calmness of demeanour, and recovered mastery over his own feelings.

He soon found that he should amply need both. When he presented himself at Ethelwode House he was refused admittance, on the plea that Miss Percival never received gentlemen visitors.

"She will receive me, however, I am sure, if you will send up my card," said Edward.

The man whom the porter called to take up the card had been with the family at Ethelwode, and immediately recognized Mr. Annesley.

"I'm afraid it's no use taking up the card, sir," said he; "as Miss Percival is very unwell, and orders were given this morning that no notes or letters should be taken to her, for fear of disturbing her."

"Unwell!" involuntarily ejaculated Edward, at this confirmation of Ellen's sufferings. "Cannot I see Lady Ethelwode, then?"

"Her ladyship is not out of her room, sir; she never comes down before luncheon."

"Lord Ethelwode, is he at home?"

"He is out of town, sir; he went on Saturday, and is not expected home this week."

"Mademoiselle Juliani, then?" exclaimed Edward, in despair.

"I do not know about *her*," said the man, hesitating; "if you please, sir, I will go and ask."

Mr. Annesley did please, most certainly, and the man went. During the few moments of his absence, Edward paced up and down the court with uncontrollable impatience. Ellen was in that house, within a few yards of him — one of those windows might be hers. She was there in sickness and suffering, that a few words of his might alleviate, and he could not reach her. He could not utter those words, and bid her be comforted. He inwardly cursed the barriers of pomp and formality, wherewith the houses of the great are hedged round, so that, to obtain access to them without a pass-word, is almost as difficult an enterprise, as to enter a besieged city. In his bursting impatience, he could almost have called aloud on Ellen's name, and bid her come to him from their entrenchments, and allow them no longer to divide her from him.

At length the servant returned with a message from Mademoiselle Juliani, to say that she was too much engaged with Lady Ethelwode and Miss Percival to see Mr. Annesley. There was no further hope for the present, and Edward turned away from the door, with a heart burning with vexation and anxiety.

He returned again in the evening, but Lady Ethelwode and Mademoiselle Juliani were out, and the same answer was given to his inquiries concerning Ellen. She was rather worse than in the morning, and quite unable to see any one. The

man would not take upon himself to send either a note or a card up to her, after the positive orders he had received. He could only promise to give them to Mademoiselle Juliani, to be conveyed to Miss Percival, when she was fit to see them.

How did Edward long at that moment that Egbert had been at home ! He would have procured him access to Ellen, or, at least, have carried his words to her, and brought him back sure tidings in answer. He could have confided in him without fear of his being won over to abandon his trust. But Egbert was far away, at his tutor's, and Edward was forced to content himself with leaving a note for Ellen, which he had written in case of a second failure, and in which he had said every thing that could convince her of the gross deception which had been practised upon her ; every thing that could soothe her, and set her mind at rest, by the assurance that his love was, and ever had been, hers. He enclosed this note in one to Mademoiselle Juliani, entreating her to give it to Ellen as soon as possible ; and with a mind somewhat relieved by this proceeding, he returned to the hotel, to get as much of the rest he so greatly needed, as his harassing anxiety would allow him to enjoy.

The next morning he was again in Piccadilly, as early as the aristocratic perversion of night into day allowed of a hope that the household would be stirring. His inquiries were answered as before. He could not be admitted, and there was no note for him. Miss Percival was just the same, and there was no talk of her leaving her room at present.

Edward proceeded, with a heavy heart, to Grosvenor Square. Louisa Conway was the only person

he could apply to under these circumstances. She must know something of Ellen's real state; she was a true friend, both to her and himself, and he hoped, through her means, to make the truth reach Ellen. But, to his dismay, he found that the Conways had left town; they had been gone some days, and the woman left in charge of the house could not tell him their direction; she only knew that they were not gone to Oaklands.

This was a heavy blow to Annesley, and he soon found that Louisa's absence was even a greater misfortune than he had at first considered it. Day after day, as he returned to Ethelwode House, he received the same answer to all his inquiries and demands for admittance. He was invariably excluded, on one plea or another; and, at length, it was with a painful effort that he mustered up calmness sufficient to face, unmoved, the porter's insolent grin, as he repeated the sentence of exclusion, with malicious satisfaction at the vexation of the troublesome visitor. He had written, again and again, not only to Ellen, but to her mother, and to Mademoiselle Juliani. The two former returned no answer, and the latter once only wrote a few lines, stating, that she had been commissioned to tell Mr. Annesley, that Lady Ethelwode and her daughter requested him to desist from any further attempts to see or communicate with them.

Finding all his attempts to obtain an entrance unavailing, as a last desperate hope, Edward spent hour after hour, pacing up and down the front of the house, watching for the appearance of Lady Ethelwode's carriage, and determined to force her to hear him. But no carriage issued from the gloomy portal. Lady Ethelwode seemed to have foreseen

his intention, and to have resolved not to expose herself to meeting him. Other carriages drove in and out, and, more than once, he saw Lord Caldwell's go in, and remain so long, that he was sick at heart with watching for its reappearance. He, alone, it was evident, was to be excluded, and his heart burned fiercely within him at the thought that he had been thus coldly, silently, contemptuously, cast off. He could not believe, however, that Ellen had any share in this treatment. "She had been deceived, misled; she was now, evidently, carefully watched over, perhaps coerced; and the thought of her sorrow made Edward grieve the more bitterly over their separation, and chafe the more vehemently against the barriers which had been raised up between them.

At length the Saturday came, and with it a letter from Mrs. Allen, informing him that she had failed in finding any one to take his duty for him on the morrow. He was obliged to leave town. But before he went, he made one last effort to see Ellen, but it was as unavailing as all the previous ones, and he turned his back on the vast and busy metropolis with a sensation of despair.

His countenance, changed, worn, and haggard, told the story of his journey to the anxious watchers at home, before he uttered a word. Their silent and affectionate sympathy was some solace to his wounded spirit, and he was grateful to them both, and more especially to Mrs. Allen, for their forbearance, in speaking of Ellen with the same kindness and charity as formerly, although he knew that the fond mother could not but feel some bitterness towards one who had brought such sorrow on the pride and darling of her heart.

Neither did they torment him with questions. Mrs. Allen seemed rather desirous to prevent him speaking on the subject, more than was necessary. She was anxious that he should have rest, if possible—rest of body and mind; for his whole appearance too plainly indicated that he had had none during his absence.

It was not till the next evening, when the trying duties of the Sabbath were over, that she again recurred to the subject. Edward was sitting by the window, gazing intently on the glowing sunset, and she knew that his thoughts were with Ellen.

“Do you think,” said she, gently, “that it is all over—that there is no more hope?”

“I fear, none,” replied he, in a tone which went to her heart, it was so unlike his usual voice. “I mean to try one more chance. I shall write to Lord Ethelwode to-morrow, and enclose a letter to Ellen; if that remains unanswered, I must conclude that I am finally rejected. If I could but know that it is her own doing, that she has not been unduly influenced—perhaps deceived, constrained—my mind would be more at rest.”

Mrs. Allen sighed deeply, but on this subject she could give him no assistance. Every supposition was almost equally painful; and, as she could give no comfort, she remained silent, inwardly praying for the sufferers.

Edward wrote the next morning to Lord Ethelwode, as he had said. He spoke strongly, and earnestly reminded his lordship of his former promises of friendship and service, and entreated him, if Ellen had indeed come to the decision of finally breaking off her engagement, to let him know his fate explicitly, and not leave him to gather it from

the contemptuous silence which had hitherto been maintained towards him. He enclosed a letter to Ellen, in Lord Ethelwode's, repeating all he had said before, and urging her not lightly to destroy his happiness, and perhaps her own, by the unfounded suspicions that some enemy to them both seemed to have raised in her mind to divide her from him. When these letters were despatched, his mind felt more at rest, and he returned to his usual avocations, determined to abide, in patience, the answer which was to decide his fate.

The week which had passed so heavily to Edward had seemed even more weary and miserable to Ellen. Though she had told him in her letter that all intercourse was at an end between them; though she told herself so, and tried to persuade herself that she wished it to be so; yet, as day after day passed away, and brought no tidings of him, no word even of farewell, she, who had thought that no sorrow could be so great as her sorrow, began now to feel that she had not yet drank the cup to its dregs.

She had written that fatal letter in a moment of desperation; but in the calmer thoughts which succeeded, when exhaustion brought temporary quiet, she had felt that she might have acted too hastily, that she might have been deceived; Mademoiselle Juliani might have been mistaken, or misrepresented what she heard. Proofs of Edward's love had come back like refreshing dew on her seared and burning heart; and faint glimmerings of hope that all might yet be well, that her misery would pass away like a fearful phantasm, beamed on her tempest-tossed soul. Edward would write; he would say that she had been de-

ceived—that the rock on which she had rested her whole existence was not a false, unreal mockery. He would come to her, perhaps, and she would feel once again that there was truth and hope in the world. But, as Saturday, Sunday, Monday, wore wearily away, and Edward neither came nor wrote, the heart-sickness of hope delayed added its heavy weight to her misery.

Still she thought it was impossible all should have ended thus; that Edward should have welcomed so gladly her first hasty dismissal, as not to make one feeble remonstrance, not write one line to express (if it were but in common courtesy) that he felt regret that it should be so; not even a word of farewell to her who had loved him so long and so devotedly. It could not be—and yet no letter came. So rudely, so entirely had the tie that bound her to him been snapped asunder, that Ellen felt as if some wide dark chasm had suddenly yawned open between the past and the present.

Such mental agony as this—the alternate fever-fits of hope and despair, the sleepless nights and the days of racking suspense—could not be endured without affecting the body; and on the Monday Ellen was, as the servant had truly told Edward, too ill to leave her room. A physician was called in, who, as usual, recommended perfect quiet; as if there could be quiet to the mind which had lost its all of hope, and was tossing without light or stay on the gloomy sea of despair.

His recommendation, however, served one purpose, that of quieting Mademoiselle Juliani's conscience, which had smitten her when she saw the effects of her artifice, and of satisfying her that she was only obeying the doctor's orders in with-

holding from Ellen Edward's letters, and the fact of his being in town.

Ellen herself smiled a bitter smile as she heard the physician's words, and thought of the only quiet she could conceive of, the quiet of the grave. Yet still, at times, she hoped against hope, and involuntarily, every knock at the door, every foot-step on the stairs, made her start up in her bed, and her heart beat thick and fast; and when the next moment convinced her that it was not he, she sank back on her pillow, and the dark room seemed darker than before.

Lady Ethelwode, who was wholly ignorant of what had passed, and who had been persuaded by Mademoiselle Juliani and Lord Caldwell that she also was unwell, and ought not to go out in these cold easterly winds, often came up to sit with Ellen by way of something to do. On these occasions, she made a point of repeating the names of all the people that had called, all those who had anxiously inquired after Miss Percival, and been concerned to hear of her illness. On Lord Caldwell's solicitude she expatiated with peculiar emphasis, and Ellen, in the midst of her desolation, felt touched that any one should care for her so kindly. But the one name she pined to hear her mother never uttered, and the attention of others only made her feel the more keenly the cruel neglect of him who was the cause of all her suffering.

Thus passed away a whole week, the week that Edward had spent in town in vain attempts to gain access to her. The fever had left her, and she was reluctantly forced to acknowledge to herself that she was daily regaining her strength. Still she could not summon up courage to leave her quiet

and darkened room, where she could indulge without interruption her own miserable thoughts, and was called upon to make no exertion.

Lord Ethelwode was, therefore, alone at breakfast with Mademoiselle Juliani, when he received Annesley's letter. He had gone down into the country to see Egbert two days before Edward came up, and had only just returned, so that he was in complete ignorance of all that had taken place in the interval, and his first feeling was one of unfeigned astonishment. Although he had narrowly watched the progress of Lord Caldwell's suit to Ellen, he had seen no difference in her manner to him which could imply a change of feeling. She was always frank and cordial, but nothing more—treating him rather as a friend whose age sanctioned more unreserved intercourse with him than with younger men, than as a suitor for her hand. Nor had he found any reason to suppose that her feelings were changed towards Edward. There was almost always a letter for him amongst those he had to frank, and he could not guess whether the contents were long or short; and Ellen always spoke with eager joy of the prospect of returning to Ethelwode. He was too little with his stepdaughter to discern the slighter signs of inward restlessness of a mind ill at ease, and shaken in its trust; and although it was with keen disappointment that he felt his hope of regaining the old abbey lands grow daily weaker and weaker; and his proud spirit chafed fiercely at the thought that he had degraded himself in vain by his compact with the unprincipled man who possessed them; he could almost have found it in his

heart to rejoice at Lord Caldwell's failure, and in the triumph of his humble rival.

His first feeling of surprise at Edward's letter was quickly succeeded by one of intense joy. The stumbling-block which had stood in the way of all his hopes was then removed, and removed without any further participation of his own. He had not acted against his son's friend; he had left Ellen unbiassed, only giving her the means of making a fair choice by opening his house to Lord Caldwell, and by bringing her to town. She had rejected Annesley of her own free will, and at the very time when he thought her love for him stronger than ever. As Lord Ethelwode lay this flattering unction to his soul, he felt lighter at heart than he had done since the day of his compact with Lord Caldwell.

There was, however, a very disagreeable task before him. Mr. Annesley had appealed to him, and he felt himself bound by that appeal to see him fairly dealt by. It was necessary to obtain some explanation of this extraordinary affair before he could act in it, and his lordship accordingly addressed himself to Mademoiselle Juliani.

"Do *you* know any thing, Mademoiselle, of this business between Miss Percival and Mr. Annesley?" he began, as he met her eyes fixed on his countenance, as if trying to read there the contents of the letter he held in his hand.

"What business?" asked the Italian, in a tone of unconsciousness, though her keen eye had recognised the handwriting and post-mark, and her heart was beating thick with the fear lest the letter should bring to light some of her machinations against the writer.

"Why, I have just received a letter from Mr. Annesley, in which he speaks of Ellen having abruptly discarded him, and of his having been in town all last week, and been constantly refused admission into this house, and his letters left unanswered. Did you know any thing of this?"

"No, indeed. I thought something had gone wrong, because Miss Percival has not written to Mr. Annesley lately, and she seems to have something weighing on her mind, but she never speaks to me on this subject."

"But you must have known that he called here every day, and was refused admittance. Although Miss Percival may choose to discard her lover, when he ceases to be agreeable to her, that is no reason why a man *I* have a regard for is to be excluded from my house, and treated without common civility."

"I had nothing to do with it, my Lord," humbly began the toady, who knew that his lordship, in one of his stern moods, was not to be trifled with. "I certainly knew that Mr. Annesley called here several times, but Miss Percival was ill in her bed, you know, and that was the reason, I suppose, she did not answer his notes. Lady Ethelwode was unwell, too; and as your lordship was absent, Mr. Annesley could not be admitted. I am sure no intentional rudeness was meant to him."

Lord Ethelwode was satisfied with this explanation, which he had felt it due to his dignity to demand.

"Mr. Annesley has appealed to me," said he; "finding that all other means were unavailing, and he requests to have an immediate and decisive answer. I suppose it will be the same, as Ellen

cannot have changed her mind again so soon. However, I will speak to her myself, and know how I am to act. Will you go up to her, Mademoiselle, and tell her that I wish to see her?"

Mademoiselle Juliani trembled; she well knew that if such an interview took place, all her treachery must come to light.

"I will go up, certainly, immediately," said she, rising from the table, "but I think it will be of no use, for Miss Percival is still in bed."

"Very well, then; I will wait till she gets up. Any time before the post goes out will do. But I am determined upon sending Annesley the answer he requires to-day. Ellen has no right to keep him in suspense, and the sooner the business is settled the better."

"If your lordship would allow me to offer an opinion, I think it would be better that you should not attempt to see Miss Percival. Her nerves have been so shaken, and she is so weak, that such an interview might have serious consequences."

"But what is to be done? I must see her, sooner or later. Annesley has appealed to me, and I hold myself bound to see him fairly dealt by."

"Certainly; but if your lordship would send his letter to Miss Percival, would it not answer the purpose as well, and spare her a painful conversation; she could then judge for herself of what Mr. Annesley urges, and let you know her answer. He has written to her, also, has he not?"

"Yes. There is the letter. Well, I suppose you are right; women understand each other best." This was said in a tone which seemed to imply that they were not worth a man's attempting

understand them. "Manage it so, if you like; these are the letters, only beg her to let me know her decision as quickly as possible, unless she chooses to write it herself."

The Italian grasped the letters with scarcely dissembled eagerness, and left the room immediately, lest his lordship should change his mind. She had already arranged her plan of operations; and having hastily glanced over the letters, she carefully locked them up in her desk, and proceeded to Ellen's room, to fulfil the mission she had been entrusted with.

"Come in," said Ellen, as she knocked at the door.

There was something in the listless tone in which the words were spoken, so unlike the former glad-some music of that voice, and still more in the pale, dejected countenance of the speaker, which touched even the heart of the treacherous Italian. She could not at once enter upon the subject that brought her there, so she sat down by Ellen's bedside, and began making inquiries as to her health, that morning, and the manner in which she had spent the night.

Ellen did not like to be asked about her health. She could not bear to acknowledge that she was better, for she dreaded being obliged to leave her room, and mingle again in society. She answered Mademoiselle Juliani's questions as briefly as possible, and turned away, in hopes the importunate visitor would take the hint and leave her alone, but Mademoiselle Juliani was immoveable.

"I am sorry," said she, at last, "that you are not better, and that you slept so ill. I was in

hopes to have found you stronger, as I have something of importance to talk to you about."

Ellen started up in her bed. To her there was but one thing of importance in the world.

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed; "you have a letter from Edward—perhaps he is come himself—he is here; oh, tell me, tell me quick, for God's sake!"

"No, no, he is not here," said Mademoiselle Juliani, almost terrified into betraying herself by Ellen's sudden vehemence.

Ellen sank back with a groan.

"I will tell you all about it, if you will but be quiet."

"Do not talk to me of quiet," said Ellen, passionately, "when I am well nigh driven to madness. If you have any mercy, tell me at once what has happened."

For one moment Mademoiselle Juliani wavered. Ellen's look was so wild that she almost dreaded the effect of her words. But she had committed herself too far to recede; she had not courage to confess her guilt, and a thought of the rich price she was to receive for it steeled her again to her task.

"Will you not tell me?" again repeated Ellen, quivering with eagerness.

"Mr. Annesley has written....." began Mademoiselle Juliani.

"I knew he would!" exclaimed Ellen, her whole countenance lighting up with an expression of triumphant joy—"I knew he could not use me so cruelly. Where is his letter? Give it me; quick—quick!"

"The letter is not to you, but to Lord Ethel-

wode. I am grieved—most grieved to pain you; but I am afraid its contents are not exactly such as you anticipate.”

“But let me see it—only let me see it!” said Ellen, imploringly. “Ask Lord Ethelwode for it. Let me see his own hand-writing—his own words.”

“I did ask his lordship, in anticipation of your request, but he thought it would merely hurt you more, and he is now gone out, and has taken it with him. He desired me to tell you its contents, and to bring him your answer, as he wishes to reply to Mr. Annesley without delay.”

“Tell me, then!” said Ellen, in a scarcely articulate voice, drawing herself up into an erect and rigid attitude, and clasping her hands tightly together, as if to nerve herself to meet the blow which was going to fall upon her.

“There is little to tell, I am sorry to say. Mr. Annesley merely informs Lord Ethelwode of your having dissolved the engagement between you, and requests to know whether he is to consider your decision as final.”

“And is that all?—is there no word, no message for me?”

The Italian turned away from Ellen’s eyes, which were fixed upon her, as if on her answer hung her sentence of life and death, and replied, slowly,

“That is all.”

Ellen hid her face in her hands, and groaned aloud, although the blue veins in her forehead swelled almost to bursting, and her whole frame shook with the violence of the effort she made to restrain every expression of grief.

“My dear Miss Percival,” said Mademoiselle Juliani, strongly moved by the sight of her agony,

"pray do not grieve so. I cannot bear to see you so miserable. Let me write to Mr. Annesley. Let me tell him what you are suffering, and bid him come to you?"

"And insult me again with his pity!" exclaimed Ellen, starting up, and flushing crimson as she spoke. "Never, never, though I were to die for it! Lord Ethelwode wanted my answer; let him tell Mr. Annesley that my decision is irrevocable; let him tell him that all tie between us is as completely broken, as if death itself had parted us; that I would give my life-blood to efface the recollection that such a tie had ever existed. There is my answer. Go, go!—take it this moment, this instant! and let me never hear his name again!"

Mademoiselle Juliani gladly obeyed the impetuous command; it was less painful to break a heart than to see it break. She left the room, laying the soothing unction to her conscience, that she had spoken nothing but the truth concerning Mr. Annesley's letter, although it might not be the whole truth, and reflecting, not without satisfaction, that now, also, she had nothing but the truth to tell Lord Ethelwode.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"And now I live—oh! wherefore do I live!
And with that pang I prayed to be no more."

WORDSWORTH.

Edward had not to wait long for Ethelwode's answer. In this case no maddening suspense was added to all that he had already to endure. The letter arrived by return of post, and was as cold, and courteous, and stately as if it had treated of the commonest matter of daily business. Lord Ethelwode regretted to state that Miss Percival's decision remained unaltered, and that she wished Mr. Annesley to consider all intercourse between them at an end. She had explained her motives for this decision in a former letter, and had nothing further to add. His lordship fully acknowledged Mr. Annesley's claim to his friendship and services; and in any other way that could be pointed out he should be happy to be of use to him. But Mr. Annesley must be aware that he had no influence over the feelings or actions of his stepdaughter; and, even if he had, he should not feel justified in exerting it on this occasion. Under these circumstances, therefore, he could only express his regret at the untoward event which he was thus made the unwilling means of communicating. The letter ended with a few commonplace expressions of condolence, and an assurance of his lordship's continued esteem and regard.

Edward read this letter over three times before he could bring himself to believe that this was really the end of his long, bright dream of love—that it was with these cold, heartless words, uttered by another, that Ellen cast him from her for ever, and separated her destiny from his. As the full conviction of the truth entered his mind, he bowed his head down, and remained silent and motionless, as if stunned by the blow. When he looked up again, he met Mrs. Allen's anxious and tearful glance fixed upon him. He put Lord Ethelwode's letter into her hand, and left the room.

It was many hours before she saw him again; but, during the whole time she had heard his heavy and irregular footsteps pacing incessantly up and down his narrow apartment overhead, and she easily guessed how they had been passed. He had now regained, at least, outward calmness; and when she gave him back the letter, he merely said, as he took it,

“Do not let us speak again of *that*.”

The next day he went forth as usual to the toilsome labours of his profession; and, whilst he stood by the bed-side of the sick, and administered consolation to the weary and heavy-laden, none but those who knew him well, and watched him closely, read in his pale countenance, and mild, quiet voice, that he himself stood in deepest need of consolation, and bore the heaviest burden of all.

In a far different spirit did Ellen meet and endure her sorrow. It was so far fortunate for her, that Mademoiselle Juliani had aroused her pride, at the same time that she had crushed the last hope to which she had clung. It saved her from sinking beneath this second, and heaviest

blow. The exertion she had not energy enough to make before, she now made, for fear any one should guess the cause of her sufferings. She left her sick room, and took her place once more in the family circle, as if, in the interval since she had left it, the whole course and complexion of her existence had not been changed. Lord Ethelwode remarked, with secret contempt at her fickleness, the gay, careless demeanour she assumed; yet he was puzzled by the contrast it presented with her pallid countenance and wasting frame. However, as Mademoiselle Juliani had told him that it was Ellen's particular request that Edward's name should never be mentioned to her, he made no comments, and contented himself with the reflection, that women always were inexplicable, and that no sensible man should ever commit himself with them.

As yet, however, Ellen could not bring herself to enter again into the world. Invitation after invitation poured in, but she turned away from them with loathing. What had she to do in those gay scenes, when despair was gnawing at her heart? In vain Mrs. Carew wrote notes, and Lord Caldwell paid his daily visit at Ethelwode House; Ellen always returned the same answer to the former, and avoided seeing the latter. She had not strength yet to meet one who knew Edward, and had been acquainted with their engagement. Louisa Conway was the only person who had known them both, whom she could have seen at such a time, and on whose affection she could have leant her torn and fevered heart, and found rest and solace. But Louisa was far away, and although she had written several times, Ellen could not answer her.

She *could* not tell her what had happened, for she felt that to dwell upon it would have maddened her.

There was one person, however, to whom she now felt that it was necessary to speak of it. This was her mother, who was yet in complete ignorance of the termination of her engagement. It was a most painful task to contemplate, and Ellen delayed it from day to day; but it could, at last, be delayed no longer. She collected, therefore, all her courage and self-command; and one morning that she had, as usual, entered her mother's room to inquire how she had slept, instead of leaving it again immediately, as she generally did, she closed the door which led into the adjoining apartment, and came and sat down beside Lady Ethelwode's sofa.

"What is the matter, Ellen?" inquired the latter, as she watched these unusual proceedings. "You look so dreadfully solemn, and as pale as a ghost, child; has anything happened?"

"Yes, something has happened; but I do not know whether *you* will rejoice or sorrow at it. I should have told you before, but—but—"

"But what, my dear?" said her mother, fretfully. "Pray tell me at once, and do not keep me in suspense; it makes me so nervous."

"My engagement with Mr. Annesley is at an end; we have parted for ever," said Ellen, in a tone of such forced calmness, that her voice sounded hollow and death-like.

"Is that all!" exclaimed Lady Ethelwode. "Good gracious, child, how you frightened me! I thought Egbert must be ill, or that something dreadful had happened. You really should be

more cautious, when you know how terribly nervous I am."

Ellen turned silently away, and in her effort to control all outward signs of emotion, she clenched her hands together with a force, which drove the nails into her flesh.

"But now, my dear," continued her mother, "tell me how you and Mr. Annesley quarrelled. Of course I am delighted to hear your engagement is broken off; but it is only a very short time ago that you were quite angry with me for hinting at the possibility of such a thing."

"Everything was different then," said Ellen, speaking with difficulty, "I have since learnt circumstances—facts of which I was then ignorant; but do not ask me now, dear mother; another time I shall be better able to tell you all."

"Oh! it does not signify. Since that foolish engagement is really at an end, I do not care how it happened. Lord Caldwell was quite right in saying that a season in London would put all that romantic nonsense out of your head. Now, I really hope I shall see you marry as you ought to do, with your advantages. Lady Frances tells me every day, that the Duke of Dainsworth is dying for you, and has only been deterred from proposing by the rumour of this engagement. Then, there is Lord Caldwell, over head and ears in love, Mademoiselle Juliani says—"

"Lord Caldwell!" repeated Ellen, roused by the name, from the stupor into which she had sunk, whilst her mother was speaking. "How ridiculous! a man old enough to be my father."

"What does that signify, my dear? Such things happen every day. There is Mrs. Danville, who

married a man old enough to be her grandfather; to be sure, she did it out of pique to Mr. St. John; and Lady Lucy Luttrell, who married old infirm Lord Claredale, and is as happy as the day is long. So you see, Ellen, you would do nothing extraordinary in marrying Lord Caldwell; though, perhaps, the Duke would be better; higher rank, but less money. It is not many girls, as Lady Frances says, who have such a choice. But what is the matter with you, child? you are not attending to me; you look quite stupified."

"I have a bad head-ache," said Ellen, passing her hand over her forehead, as if to chase away some heavy bodily or mental pain.

"How very provoking!" said her mother, pettishly; "just to-day, when Lord Caldwell and the duke dine here. You always have a head-ache, or something the matter with you, when I want you to look well. Do go and lie down, my dear, and get rid of it as fast as you can. It would be the death of me to go through receiving all those people, without you to help me."

Ellen did not need a second bidding. She regained her own room with what strength she had left, thankful that her task was over, though her mother's indifference had added a more crushing weight to her sorrow.

She was glad to avail herself of the excuse of her head-ache, not to leave her room again the whole day, or to see any body, and she remained undisturbed in her solitary wretchedness. Towards evening, Mademoiselle Juliani forced her way in, on the plea of a message of inquiry from Lady Ethelwode. Ellen's head-ache was worse, of course,

and her pale, haggard countenance sufficiently testified to what she had endured.

"Ah, those men, those men!" said Mademoiselle Juliani, in a tone of commiseration. "If they could know how much misery they make us poor women suffer, how fondly we wear the willow for them, after they have insulted and trampled upon us, they would be more merciful!"

The words struck home. Ellen started up from her couch with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes.

"This is more than I *can* bear, Mademoiselle Juliani," exclaimed she, indignantly; "I am not yet fallen so low as to be an object for *your* pity, and I beg, henceforth, that if you must intrude your presence where it is unwelcome, and your words where they are not wanted, you will choose some other subject for your reflections, than my feelings or affairs."

Mademoiselle Juliani shrank back from the glance of indignant scorn fixed upon her, and protested, in the humblest tones, that she was far from meaning to offend; that she had thought that the natural anxiety and interest of so old a friend, might justify her expressing sympathy; but that, henceforth, no allusion to the subject should pass her lips. So saying, she retreated from the room; but, as she closed the door, the expression of servility gave way to one of revengeful malice, and she muttered between her teeth, "*Me la pagara, me la pagara!*"

Meanwhile, the words which had so angered Ellen had produced the effect the speaker intended. Ellen's pride was fairly roused. She knew that the termination of her engagement would soon be generally known, and she resolved that no one

should have it in their power to feel pity for her; no one should suppose that she would need pity. She was to appear this evening in company, for the first time since her illness; and she strove, with anxious care, to efface every trace of inward suffering. So successful was the effort, that when she entered the drawing-room, Mademoiselle Juliani started at the metamorphosis in her appearance. Never had she assisted her mother to do the honours of the house with more perfect and winning grace. Never had her eyes shone more brightly, her cheek flushed with a richer glow. Never had she seemed in higher, more buoyant spirits. Throughout the evening she talked, laughed, sang, in restless gaiety. Yet, as the party broke up, more than one of the guests remarked that Miss Percival was altered; and that, beautiful, fascinating as she was, she had lost much of the quiet, unforced grace, which had been one of the greatest charms of her manner.

Lord Caldwell lingered till the last; but, when he shook hands with her, he was startled by the burning heat of hers. As soon as he was gone, she gaily wished her mother good night, ran lightly up stairs to her own room, closed the door; then, staggering to her sofa, she gasped out to her terrified maid:—

“Do not call, Mary; let no one in,” and fainted away.

CHAPTER XXV.

"When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions."

SHAKESPEARE.

Whilst all this was passing in London, Louisa, whose presence there might have saved Ellen from falling a victim to Lord Caldwell's machinations, and her own faithless, jealous temper, was quietly proceeding with her father on their tour through the midland counties. Away from the scenes which so painfully recalled the past, she had gradually regained, in some measure, her peace of mind; and, though her sorrow was not less deep, she no longer allowed it to be so absorbing. Her father's watchful affection ever reminded her what claims life still had upon her: she left no means untried to recover her strength and cheerfulness, that that life might still be useful to him, and devoted to the task Heaven had assigned to her, be it what it might.

As she became more able to turn her thoughts from herself, they recurred frequently and anxiously to Ellen. She had received only one hurried note from her since they had parted, and the letters she had written had remained unanswered. It had been a painful effort to her to write, but her friend had urgently requested it, and she would not disappoint her; but this only made Ellen's own silence seem more strange. When she and her father were

on the point of returning home, she wrote again to tell her of their plans, begging her to let her find a letter at Oaklands. But long before that day arrived, Louisa was too entirely engrossed by other and more painful subjects to remark that her request was again neglected; and Ellen was forgotten in the new and overwhelming sorrow which rudely destroyed the peace beginning to dawn once more on her weary heart.

The day before they left Matlock, Sir Charles made a long excursion on foot amongst the hills, and returned evidently heated and over-tired. Louisa observed, in the evening, in spite of all his endeavours to conceal it, that he was very unwell; but, when her anxious inquiries forced him to acknowledge his indisposition, he attributed it entirely to heat and fatigue; laughed at her wish to send for a doctor, and said that a good night's rest would completely restore him. His daughter could not treat the matter so lightly; and, after he had gone to rest, she could not sleep in peace till she had stolen to his door to ascertain that all was quiet within. A low moan of pain, and the sound of her father, restlessly turning in his bed, induced her to enter. Her fears were justified on finding that his headache had increased, and that he was evidently feverish and ill.

Still he refused to allow a medical man to be sent for; and he sent her away to rest with the assurance that there was nothing to be alarmed about in his indisposition. In the morning it was in vain that she tried to persuade him to take a day's rest before they started on their journey. He was anxious to proceed; and, although he was evidently rather worse than better, they set off as it had been

settled. They had gone but a few stages on their way, when his illness increased so alarmingly that he became unable to go on; and Louisa had the misery of seeing her father, now seriously ill, reduced to the scanty comforts of a country inn, and the attendance of a village apothecary. The latter, however, proved more skilful than could have been expected, and his prompt and vigorous measures so far restored Sir Charles, that he was pronounced able to resume his journey; and, after a few days' intense anxiety, Louisa was able to look forward to her father reaching home in safety.

How carefully did she superintend all the preparations for the journey, all the arrangements for her father's comfort in the carriage, which might lessen the fatigue necessarily so great for an invalid! Her own recent weakness was forgotten; and, as always happens with a strong mind, her strength and energy seemed to rise with the occasion which called them forth. The sun shone brightly in the unclouded summer sky, as they once more set out on their journey; and Louisa, with the superstition of anxious hope, hailed it as an auspicious omen. Alas! it soon proved to have been a false one. In spite of all her father's endeavours to conceal it from her, she soon perceived that his illness was fast returning upon him, and with more alarming symptoms than before. She anxiously urged him to stop once more, but he said he could not again encounter the horrors of a sick room in an inn, and they proceeded at the full speed of four horses. Still, Louisa thought the journey never would end: her father grew worse and worse, and she sat in agony beside him, powerless to relieve his sufferings, and only taking her tearful gaze from his face to count

the milestones, whose number seemed, to her impatience, to be increasing as they went on.

When, at length, they reached Oaklands, Sir Charles was obliged to be carried up to his bed. A messenger was instantly despatched for Doctor Curewell, and, whilst awaiting his arrival, Louisa exhausted all old Sarah's stock of remedies in vain attempts to soothe the sufferer's pain. At first, the welcome cessation of noise and motion, and the satisfactory assurance of being at home, seemed to afford him some relief; but before Dr. Curewell could arrive, the fever was raging again, and the disease was at its height.

Louisa retired whilst the physician was with her father, and during those few minutes of inaction and rest, the only one she had had during that long, miserable day, she tried to collect her thoughts, and prepare herself for the tidings she might be doomed to hear, for she had no longer strength to hope. Her bodily powers were worn out; and now there was an interval in the incessant exertion she had been forced to make, she felt that it had only been the excitement which had kept up her mental energy. It deserted her now that she was alone, and exertion was no longer required; and when her old nurse entered the room, to entreat her to take some refreshment, she found her young mistress on her knees, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"You must not take on so, dear heart," said the affectionate creature, the tears standing in her own eyes as she spoke; "you'll make yourself ill, too, and then, who will nurse Sir Charles?"

She showed her knowledge of her mistress's character in using this argument: it was the most

effectual she could have chosen. The fear of being unable to attend her father, overpowered, in Louisa's mind, every other feeling. She rose immediately, forced herself to take the refreshment offered to her, and in a few minutes she was able to attend Dr. Curewell's summons, with a firm step and a composed countenance, and to receive his directions concerning the treatment of the patient; but, in the searching glance she fixed on the physician's countenance, as she desired to have his real opinion of the case, the soul's trembling anxiety was revealed; Dr. Curewell had intended to conceal the truth, but he could not resist the power of those eyes, and he reluctantly acknowledged that Sir Charles's life was in imminent danger.

Louisa did not faint, but she turned so deadly pale, that the physician hastened towards her in alarm; he was startled by the hollow calmness of her voice, as she assured him that she did not need his assistance. For a few minutes she remained motionless and silent, and then, rousing herself by a strong effort, she returned to her father's room. Here there was a call for her utmost exertions. Every trace of weakness quickly disappeared, and, as she moved about, so calm and self-collected, a stranger might have thought her indifferent to the painful scene before her, but from the occasional quivering of her lip, and the intense anxiety of her gaze, as she fixed it upon her father's countenance.

Dr. Curewell was to return early in the morning, but the long night was before her, during which she would have nothing but her own trembling conjectures to confirm her hopes or fears. It is

needless to dwell on the misery of such a watch, during the dark, dreary hours, which now seem endless, because, with the morning, we expect the aid to which our weakness clings so helplessly—now seem to fly too fast, as each passing moment robs the sufferer of a portion of his strength, and leaves him less fit to cope with the disease.

At length, morning came, and Louisa eagerly unclosed the shutters, in the fond hope that the cheering light of day might give a less deathlike aspect to her father's wan countenance. She opened the window, and the summer air blew freshly in, laden with perfume, and bringing refreshment to her weary senses; but it brought none to him; and Louisa turned away with a bursting heart, and hastened out of the room, lest the agony of grief, she could no longer control, should disturb and distress the sufferer.

Dr. Curewell came at last, and her worst fears were confirmed. The patient had decidedly lost ground, and, though the physician still held out a faint hope of a favourable change, when the disease reached its crisis, the hope found no echo in her heart; she dared not look forward to that crisis; to her there seemed to be no future, so awful was the curtain which hung before it. Immediately on learning her father's danger, she had sent to town for the physician who had always attended him for years past, and to his arrival her whole thoughts now turned.

His greater knowledge of her father's constitution might give him a power over the disease unpossessed by Dr. Curewell, and to this faint chance she clung with the desperate eagerness of those who have but one hope left between them and

misery : but two days must elapse before he could arrive, and as Louisa gazed on her father's altered countenance, she shuddered to think that he might arrive too late. This very thought, however, gave her strength to resume her painful task. She had promised to allow old Sarah to take her place that day for a few hours, but she hurried back into her father's room, and rejected almost angrily the old woman's entreaties to be allowed to remain. Was it not robbing her of her last rights? Who could tell how much longer she might enjoy the privilege of ministering to his wants? she would not waste a moment, lose one opportunity of hearing his loved voice again.

Sarah was obliged to yield, and she reluctantly gave up her post to Louisa, whose ashy paleness and sunken eyes told plainly, in spite of her assumed tranquillity, that her fears were praying on her mind, and wearing away her tender stock of strength.

And now her task had become heavier than ever; for no fond smile, no faint pressure of the hand rewarded her care, and robbed her watching of fatigue. Her father was scarcely conscious that she was present, or aware whose hand smoothed his pillow, or presented the cooling draught to his parched lips. Hour after hour passed away, and her last trembling hope was fast merging into despair, when a slight change, at first almost imperceptible, passed over the features of the dying man. Louisa bent breathlessly over him, believing that the intensity of her gaze made her sight deceive her, but the change became more evident. The features, which had been convulsed with pain, gently relaxed; slowly and gradually consciousness

returned to the dim and glazed eyeballs; they rested on his child's face, and the sick man faintly pressed her hand, and a smile played on his lips. The crisis the physician had announced was favourably passed, and, after a while, the sufferer sank into a deep and quiet sleep.

Louisa could hardly believe her senses. She watched with more intense anxiety than before, lest that tranquil expression should pass away. She bent over him to listen to his quiet breathing; and when, at length, all her doubts and fears were lost in the conviction of her happiness, she threw herself on her knees by his side, and her overburdened heart found relief in fervent thanksgiving to the great Disposer of events, who had thus mercifully averted the blow which threatened to crush her to the earth. She remained long in that posture, mingling prayers and tears, which, for the first time in her life, flowed fast and soft, gradually lightening the weight at her heart, till, at length, from very exhaustion, she cried herself to sleep, and did not wake till a sudden movement of her father startled her, and she rose hastily, rather confused than rested, by those few moments of forgetfulness.

Her first feeling was one of dread; but the sufferer was still sleeping peacefully as before, and she crept noiselessly back to her old seat at the head of the bed, and sat silent, motionless, breathless, watching the pale features, now calm and placid, which she had so lately seen distorted by agony. Yet, more than once, that sleep, so deep, so peaceful, resting on the pain-worn countenance, seemed to her so like the sleep of death, that she

was on the point of waking him, to ascertain that he was still alive.

At that moment she felt as if all she had suffered before, all she could suffer, were as nothing, while he yet lived; while the being who had cherished her from the cradle was still spared to her; while his sustaining hand was left to guide and support her on her way. How had she dared to repine, and say that all life's happiness was gone, whilst he was left? What, then, would it have been, if, as she feared but a few hours ago, this illness had bereft her of him, and left her utterly desolate? Could she, after so great, so signal a mercy, allow one rebellious thought to wander regretfully to another? No; henceforth she would centre all her happiness in him, whom she had never till now sufficiently valued, and reward his unceasing love, his unwearied sympathy, with a gratitude and affection to which all her previous feelings should seem cold.

Meanwhile, the object of her solicitude slept peacefully on, and it was not till some hours afterwards that he awoke, and, for the first time for two days, spoke to his child.

When Dr. Curewell arrived, he pronounced him so much better as to be out of danger, unless any fatal relapse took place. Perfect quiet was now the most important thing for him; and Louisa, who could not be satisfied that his injunctions would be properly fulfilled, unless she attended to it herself, returned to her station by her father's side, in spite of the remonstrances of the physician, who thought she needed rest almost as much as Sir Charles. The latter joined his feeble entreaties that she would leave him that night to the care of

old Sarah ; but the smile with which he greeted her, when she returned to his bed-side, after having made her arrangements for the night, showed that he was not sorry to have his objections overruled, and Louisa felt at that moment as if she had never known fatigue.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ There were, whose gaze
Follow'd her form beneath the clear lamp's blaze,
And marvell'd at its radiance. But a few
Beheld the brightness of that feverish hue
With something of dim fear ; and in that glance
Found strange and sudden tokens of unrest,
Startling to meet amidst the mazy dance.”

MRS. HEMANS.

The spell which had divided Ellen from the world, and made her shrink so loathingly from its gaieties, was now broken ; she could no longer indulge her misery in darkness and lonesomeness, and, with characteristic impetuosity, she threw herself into the other extreme, and plunged recklessly and eagerly into the vortex of dissipation. With a greater dread than she had before shrunk from society, did she now recoil from even momentary solitude. She was never alone, never quiet, but when she retired to rest at night, or rather in the early morning, when, both her mind and body being exhausted by the perpetual excitement of the preceding hours, she generally found forgetfulness in sleep.

Lord Caldwell had no reason to complain now of her withdrawing from society ; wherever any object of pleasure or folly brought together the fashionable mob, there Ellen was sure to be. It mattered not whether it was night or morning—

whether it were a ball, or a concert, a lecture on chemistry, or a rage to see the learned fleas—which assembled them, Ellen eagerly joined the multitude. The confusion and noise of a crowd, the hubbub of voices, though all were empty and hollow, “like a tinkling cymbal,” were welcome, so that they drowned the still, small voice which, within her own void and aching heart, perpetually repeated, “there is no peace.” And, wherever she went, she was the brightest, the gayest. No step was so light as hers in the dance—no laugh so gay—no spirits so unflagging. She would do any thing, every thing, but be still.

Lady Ethelwode marvelled at her daughter’s wondrous energy, and left her *chaise-longue* seldom than ever, from very fatigue at the thoughts of such exertions. Keener observers than Lady Ethelwode marvelled too, and thought they could discern, in the very restlessness, the very height of her gaiety, signs that it was not the simple outward manifestations of inward gladness—that there was something hollow within, and that gay laugh but the echo which the empty heart gave back to the sounds of worldly pleasure.

Least of all did Ellen succeed, as she most wished to do, in deceiving Lord Caldwell. He had watched her from the first, and, more than once, he had been visited with a touch of remorse, as he marked the change that had taken place in her. He could interpret, well enough, the meaning of the restless brightness of her eye, the rich glowing of her cheek, while her frame was visibly wasting, and several times he tried to stop her reckless career.

“My dear Miss Percival,” he said to her once,

“you do too much—you will really kill yourself. Why do you not take more rest?”

“Rest!” replied Ellen, with a gay laugh. “Where is rest to be found in this world? There is no rest but in the grave.”

And she left him, to spring back into the crowded circle of waltzers. Every eye followed in admiration her sylph-like form, except Lord Caldwell's; he turned abruptly away, and never afterwards spoke to her on the subject of taking rest.

These passing twinges, however, by which conscience asserted her undying supremacy even over one of her most hardened and rebellious subjects, did but momentarily damp the exultation with which Lord Caldwell saw the gradual ripening of his plans into success. Since the final termination of Ellen's engagement, he had thrown off the mask of mere friendly regard, under which he had covered his real designs, so long as he had an accepted rival in the field; and his look and voice had assumed a tenderness, and his manner an assiduity, so undisguised and lover-like, that Ellen herself, preoccupied as she was, could not but be aware of the change. Yet she did not repulse him; she seemed rather to welcome his society, in preference to any one else's. He was so much older than herself, and she had been used to regard him merely as a friend, for so many months, that it never entered her mind to think of him as a lover.

She seldom thought of any thing now; her whole object was to drive away thought; and so she unresistingly allowed Lord Caldwell to possess himself, wherever she went, of the place at her side—to render her all those numerous and nameless attentions which mark the privileged lover—to

engross her conversation, even to the exclusion of others : and all this became so evident, that the world, with its usual perspicacity, concluded that Miss Percival was engaged to Lord Caldwell, and it became a tacitly understood thing, that, where the one was asked, the other should be present also ; and Ellen's train of admirers, amongst whom more than one would willingly have become a suitor, were forced reluctantly to withdraw their claims, and yield to him his apparently sanctioned privileges.

Ellen, herself, perceived nothing of this ; but the satisfactory circumstance that she saw Lord Caldwell, who was, without exception, the most agreeable person of her acquaintance, much oftener than she used to do, and that his tact and good management often saved her from being annoyed by the importunities of men, who seemed to her, after they had performed their parts as partners in a dance, of no earthly use, either to themselves or society. Lord Caldwell's inexhaustible and brilliant conversation, if that could be called conversation which was sustained almost entirely by one person, often lulled her into a calmer forgetfulness of her misery than the excitement she so eagerly sought, and she was no longer disposed now to quarrel with his sarcastic tone, and his scepticism of all high and noble things.

She was a sceptic, herself, since Edward had proved false ; and his sarcasm, cold and keen as it sometimes was, was yet gentle and kindly, in comparison with the fierce bitterness which filled *her* heart. To her wounded spirit there was, besides, something soothing in his anxious tenderness of manner, and the watchfulness with which he seemed

to guard her from every thing which could annoy or distress her. She soon began to feel that she was less miserable in his society than in any other; and he, who, with all his cunning, had not yet learnt to read a woman's heart, saw that he was ever greeted with outstretched hand and a joyous smile, and concluded that his triumph was near at hand.

This intimacy, whose speedy termination in the marriage of the parties was confidently anticipated by the set in which they moved, was looked upon by some with no friendly eyes. Amongst these were Lady Frances Montague and her daughter Minna. Lady Ethelwode had of course taken the first opportunity to inform her dear friend, Lady Frances, of the termination of Ellen's engagement. Lady Frances had warmly congratulated her on the event, and on the brilliant prospects she might now look forward to for her daughter, and had promised to whisper the fact amongst all her acquaintance, that the Duke of Dainsworth, or any other duke, marquis, earl, or peer of the realm, whatsoever, who might wish to see how a coronet would become Ellen's beautiful brow, should no longer be deterred from trying the experiment, by the belief that she was engaged to another.

Lady Frances performed her promise, but she took care to accompany the information with sundry shakes of the head and deep sighs over the sad inconstancy of her dear young friend, Ellen Percival, and the mercenary spirit which was so melancholy to perceive in so young a person, and which betokened, she feared, the decay of every thing like disinterested affection in the world; although her girls were still so unworldly, in that

respect, that she could hardly prevail upon them to receive, even with common civility, the attentions of men of rank and fortune.

Minna, however, who, notwithstanding her mother's assurances of her disinterestedness, always felt the marriage of such men as a personal and bitter injury to herself, and looked upon the fortunate bride who had been the cause of the withdrawal of a purchaser from the overstocked market of matrimony with a degree of acrimony proportioned to the rank and wealth which the above-mentioned purchaser possessed, was by no means contented with such a quiet mode of avenging herself.

In this case she felt herself peculiarly aggrieved—for Ellen's engagement to Edward, with which both she and her mother had been careful to acquaint every body, was, she had thought, sufficient security against any such nefarious proceedings on her part;—in this belief she had endured, with some degree of patience, the *éclat* which had attended Ellen's appearance in the fashionable world; and seen, without much indignation or alarm, rank and wealth sighing at her feet. The reader may judge, then, with what feelings she now saw this happy security swept away, and Ellen not only free from her engagement to the humble curate, but on the eve of forming another, if indeed it was not already formed, with one who was not only a peer, but one of the wealthiest peers in England, and whose political eminence promised, at no distant time, to place him in the highest office of the state. Such an injury was not to be borne in silence—and she determined to sift the matter to the bottom, and to revenge herself, at least, by making use of

such a golden occasion to exercise her talent for ingeniously tormenting.

She long sought in vain for an opportunity of saying any thing on the subject; for Ellen, who knew and dreaded of old Lady Frances's plausibility and Minna's keen sarcasm, had carefully avoided them; and, since the termination of her engagement, she had scarcely spoken to them, except a few hurried words of common civility when they occasionally met in a crowd.

One day, however, that Ellen was riding in the Park with Mrs. Carew, and followed, as usual, by a train of gentlemen, Minna managed to join the party; and, seizing an opportunity, when Ellen was riding a little apart from the rest, she rode up to her, and began at once her premeditated attack.

"I am so glad," said she, "to have this opportunity to speak to you quietly, for I have been so very anxious to know if it is really true that your engagement with Mr. Annesley is broken off. Lady Ethelwode told us so the other day; but, you know, your *cara madre* is not always wide awake, so I thought she might possibly have been dreaming, and am come to you for more certain information."

Scarcely had she uttered the words, before she wished she had left them unsaid — Ellen became whiter than marble, and clung to the pommel of her saddle to support herself, while she gasped for utterance.

"My dear Ellen! I beg your pardon—I did not mean—I really had no idea it would hurt you so much."

"Oh, no, no!" said Ellen, at last, bursting into a fit of wild laughter—"you did not hurt me at all --it was merely a sudden spasm. It is gone now,

so you need not look so frightened. What were you saying?—I did not hear you."

"Oh! it does not signify—I merely wanted to know if it were true about your engagement being broken off?"

"Broken off! To be sure it is," said Ellen, laughing more wildly than before. "Every thing breaks in this world some time or other, does it not?—from hearts to crockery-ware; and promises are proverbially brittle, you know."

"Well! I am glad to see you take it so merrily," said Minna. "I was afraid you might think it necessary to be grand and solemn, like Louisa Conway. But, to be sure, as Mr. Annesley is not likely ever to inherit such a property as Oaklands, you have less cause for solemnity than she had."

Ellen turned round, and looked at Minna with an expression of half-incredulous astonishment.

"Now, that is just one of Louisa's looks," said her tormentor, laughing, "only not quite stately enough. But, my dear, as you are so indignant at my hinting at Mr. Annesley's poverty, do tell me *why* you changed your mind so suddenly about him?"

Ellen apparently did not hear the question, for, turning her horse short round, she said,

"Come, Minna, you are a good horsewoman, let us leap that fence, and ride a race over the turf."

Before Minna had time to answer, Ellen had cleared the fence, and was urging her spirited Arab at the top of his speed across the turf. Sir Frederic Granville and one or two others followed her, but Minna prudently remained where she was. She had no wish to exhibit her horsemanship in competition with Ellen's, and she was angry at being thus foiled in her design upon the latter's secrets. She

waited with the remainder of the group till Ellen again joined them, and then saying, in an audible whisper,

“I am afraid you might have included brains as well as hearts in your list of brittle things—both are sometimes cracked for love.” She smiled, and bowed her adieus to the rest of the party, and rode off with her father, comforting herself with the thought that, though baffled, she had at least left a sting behind her.

A sting, indeed!—a sting, so sharp and venomous, that even she, with all her malice, could she have seen into what a sore and feverish heart she had cast it, would have felt some remorse at the deed. Ellen rode on, scarcely knowing whither she went; in the dark chaos of her mind, one thought only was distinct—a wish that she could throw herself from her horse into the calm water beside which she was now riding. Involuntarily she kept muttering to herself,

“‘There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.’”

Rest!—rest!—oh, how her worn and broken spirit yearned for rest—and there was no rest to be found! There was noise and motion all around her; the gay crowd was hurrying to and fro; voices were dinning in her ears; the grinding, ever-rolling machine of life was rolling on and on, and she must move on with it; only beneath those still waters might there be a chance of rest. She was so intently brooding on these thoughts, that Lord Caldwell had spoken to her twice before she perceived that he was riding by her side.

“Good heavens! what is the matter, dear Miss Percival?” said he, as she at length turned towards

him her ghastly countenance. "I am afraid something—somebody has annoyed you?"

"No, no, it is nothing!—I am not very well, that is all....."

"Suppose," said she, suddenly, a minute or two afterwards, as they were riding over the bridge, "I were to make Kaled leap over this parapet, as he did over the fence just now? Do you not think it would be pleasant to feel that cold, bright water closing over one, and shutting out this noisy world for ever?"

Lord Caldwell involuntarily caught hold of her bridle.

"For God's sake, Miss Percival," he exclaimed, "do not look and talk so wildly! What could bring such a dreadful thought into your head? What should make you wish to shut out the world?—you, the brightest of its denizens—so young—so beautiful—so beloved?"

"Beloved!" repeated Ellen; and she laughed a bitter laugh.

"Yes, beloved; would that I could tell you how fondly, how deeply!" added he, in a lower voice; "but this is neither the time nor the place."

Ellen looked at him with a bewildered expression.

"I believe I really am ill to-day," said she; "my head feels so confused. Will you ask Mrs. Carew if she has any objection to going home? I think I had better get there as soon as possible."

"Why not let me escort you now? Mrs. Carew is surrounded, as usual, with a crowd of people, who will only annoy you if you go with her. You

can surely trust yourself with an old friend, like me."

Ellen was not in a state to consider very attentively the propriety of such a proceeding. All she cared about, was to get home while she had any strength left. She therefore quietly acquiesced; and Lord Caldwell, having informed Mrs. Carew of her indisposition, added, that Miss Percival would not trouble her *chaperon* to return with her, but had accepted his escort, as far as her own door. Nobody thought this extraordinary, as it was now generally understood that Lord Caldwell had a right to offer her his protection; and he rode off with his fair charge, followed by the envious eyes of more than one cavalier in Mrs. Carew's train, who would have purchased, at any price, the privilege he exercised.

The supposed lovers rode home in silence. But Ellen, through the stupor of grief which seemed to numb all her faculties, could not but perceive the anxious solicitude of Lord Caldwell's manner, and she felt grateful to him for his consideration towards her. It was not till they reached Lord Ethelwode's door that he spoke again.

"I shall not ask to come in," he said, as he carefully assisted her from her horse, and led her up the flight of steps; "I am sure you require rest and quiet; and I shall hope to see you at the Duke of Dainsworth's *fête*, looking like yourself again. And do not let such wild thoughts come again into your head. Remember that there is *one* person who, in your death, would lose all that makes life worth having."

He kissed her hand as he spoke, and then left the house. Ellen stood for a moment or two,

pondering on the meaning of his words—but her head was too confused. She went up to her own room, and lay down on her bed with no consciousness, save that of undefined and utter wretchedness.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Have I not told thee that I bear a heart,
Blighted and cold? ————

• • • • •
And all the soft and playful tenderness
Which hath its home in woman's breast, ere yet
Deep wrongs have seared it; all is fled from mine.
Urge me no more."

MRS. HEMANS.

The *fête* of which Lord Caldwell had spoken was given by the Duke of Dainsworth, at his villa, near Richmond; and ever since its announcement, the whole world of fashion had been in commotion. Not to be asked to the Duke of Dainsworth's *fête*, would have been tantamount to an edict of banishment from the Paradise of Exclusivism; and, Fool's Paradise though it might be, such a sentence could not patiently be contemplated. Accordingly, all those whose position was not so indisputably high as to insure them invitations, were on the alert to obtain them, by any means, and at whatever cost. Provided they could but be seen, by a certain set, at the Duke of Dainsworth's, what signified whether they had, to obtain entrance there, descended to the most humble entreaties—stooped to the most pitiful meanness? The means were concealed—the end would be visible to all the world—all *their* world, at least; and the end,

therefore, was the only thing which need be thought of.

Manœuvres and counter-manœuvres, timely presents, notes, worthy the talents of a Talleyrand, all the machinery of feminine diplomacy, were put *en œuvre* to secure the coveted tickets which were to give their possessors the two-fold triumph of appearing to belong to the *élite* of fashion, and of looking down from the heights of superior finery on the vulgar crowd of less fortunate mortals, who could only look wistfully, and from a distance, at the paradise they were forbidden to enter.

The Duke of Dainsworth might truly say, with the French monarch, at every invitation he gave—“*Je fais cent mécontents et un ingrat* ;” and could he have discerned all the heart-burnings, the envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, which this *fête*, designed only for the purposes of pleasure, gave rise to, he would probably, being a good-natured, conscientious man, in his way, have repented himself of the responsibility he had incurred, and resolved never to do so serious a thing again.

None of these underworkings, however, were allowed to appear, when the long-wished-for day at length arrived, and the gay crowd assembled in the beautiful gardens of Beechhill Lodge. All there was bright and pleasing to the eye. Faces were dressed in smiles, whether the hearts beneath were gay or not. Honeyed tones and courteous greetings were heard all around, as if no voice there had ever been to a harsher key. No look or sound was allowed to break the polished surface of good-humour.

The weather, also, seemed bent upon doing

honour to the noble host. It was one of those beautiful days when spring is just blooming into summer, and all nature is soft, and fresh, and bright, as a young girl on the verge of womanhood. Even Ellen felt its gentle influence. The balmy summer air—the flowers, which had been to her from childhood as gentle and familiar friends—the fresh verdure all around, so delightful to the eye, after the brick walls and dusty pavements of the crowded city, seemed to soothe her feverish spirit. The excitement she usually laboured under left her for awhile. Her mind, always so alive to the influences of nature, yielded to the peaceful beauty of the scene, and she walked through the gardens with Mrs. Carew, pale, silent, dejected, yet really less utterly miserable than she had often been of late when laughing and talking the most gaily.

She would have given much to escape from her gay *chaperon*, and the train which, as usual, followed on her steps, to some quiet recess of the gardens, where she might feel herself alone, and commune in peace with nature, and gather from it, as she had so often done of yore, strength and consolation. But this was out of the question. The duke himself had joined her party, and Ellen could not reject his offered arm, which made her an object of envy to all mothers and daughters within sight, or refuse to let him lead her through the gorgeous conservatories for which Beechhill lodge was famed; and then to the water-side, where gondolas were in readiness, with gondoliers, in Venetian costumes, for whosoever wished to fancy themselves awhile in Venice, and then to the shrubberies, where bands were concealed in different places, making the air “vocal with sweet sounds.”

She was glad, and so was Lord Caldwell, who had been jealously watching their motions, when, at length, the loud gong summoned all the revellers to the tents, where the sumptuous banquet was awaiting them, and the duke was obliged to leave her, to attend, in his character of host, to guests of higher rank.

There was dancing in the evening, but Ellen did not join in it with her usual eagerness. Many people remarked, that Miss Percival looked wretchedly ill, and out of spirits; and wondered what could make one, who was the Duke of Dainsworth's chosen partner in the dance, and might be, it was shrewdly suspected, his partner for life, if she chose it, feel ill or unhappy.

Ellen would gladly have avoided dancing altogether; but it was as annoying to go on refusing the pressing solicitations of those who claimed her hand, as to accede to them, so she took her place as usual in the brilliant maze. But her languid movements contrasted strongly with the wonted elasticity of her step; and although she was annoyed by the duke, and Lord Caldwell, and Sir Frederic Granville, who was always the most assiduous in her train, expressing anxious solicitude about her, all her efforts to rally her fictitious spirits were in vain.

She had been dancing with Sir Frederic Granville, and, feeling her weariness and heaviness become almost insupportable, she made him lead her from the crowded ball-room into one of the adjoining apartments which was completely deserted. The windows were open down to the ground, and Ellen drew near to one of them to inhale the fragrant night-air, which was deliciously refreshing

after the heated atmosphere she had been breathing for the last two or three hours. Sir Frederic Granville left her for a moment, to fetch her a glass of lemonade, and, for the first time that day, she was alone. She looked out on the night: the moonlight lay bright and full on the quiet lawn, putting to shame the coloured lamps with which the gardens were illuminated; and beyond, it was gleaming on the broad river. The temptation was irresistible.

There was no one to watch or follow her, for the few people in the room were strangers to her, and Lord Caldwell had joined a knot of politicians whilst she was dancing, and was too eagerly engaged in discussion to notice her proceedings. She glided out upon the lawn, but she soon found that she was not the only one who had been tempted out by the beauty of the night. Forms were flitting to and fro amongst the shrubs, and gay voices assailed her ear. To avoid them, she hurried away from the vicinity of the house, and, crossing the turf, she soon found herself on the terrace which overhung the river. She leant against the parapet, and listened; all was silent here, save that at intervals the breeze wafted faint sounds of the distant music, scarcely loud enough to overpower the low rippling of the water against the wall. She was alone, quite alone, and in the gentler mood which had come over her, the sense of solitude was a relief instead of the torment it had lately been.

She seated herself on the low parapet, and looked up to the deep, cloudless heavens, where the moon was holding her way amidst the clustering stars, which paled in her flood of silvery light. There was something in the silent and mysterious beauty

of the pure luminary which gradually stole as a spell over Ellen's disturbed spirit. There was peace in earth and heaven, and something like peace crept into her heart also whilst looking on them. There seemed a voice from that starry firmament, from that quiet earth sleeping beneath its light, like a trustful child beneath the eyes of a mother—a voice borne on the low, sweet whisperings of the summer air, breathing to her, "*There is a God in the universe, and that God is thy Father.*"

For the first time since the blow which crushed her happiness had fallen upon her, she felt that she was not utterly desolate, utterly hopeless; that there was One who could not change, who had promised rest to the weary and heavy-laden. Her spirit was freed from its dark prison-house of unbelief, and once more looked upward in faith to a Father above. She knelt on the grass, and, leaning her head on the wall, she prayed and wept; but her tears were no longer the hot and blighting drops of despair; they fell gently and softly, for they were the tears of the broken and contrite heart, the sacrifice which God will not despise.

She had been kneeling there some time, when she heard a footstep behind her. She hastily started to her feet, and, looking round, recognised Lord Caldwell in the intruder.

"My dear Miss Percival," said he, approaching her, "this is not prudent, to expose yourself in this manner to the chill night-air and the damp of the river, after being confessedly unwell all day."

"I do not feel cold," answered Ellen, annoyed at the interruption. "I was tempted out by the beauty of the night; it so very lovely, and I was glad to escape from the crowd."

"But why come alone, and so far from the house? Your sudden disappearance from the ball-room created serious alarm, and I had some difficulty in persuading Mrs. Carew and the duke to leave to me the charge of seeking you out."

"I am sorry to have caused such a disturbance," said Ellen, smiling faintly, "but I did not think I should be missed in such a crowd."

"Not missed! Surely you did not suppose that the fairest and brightest in that crowd could leave it, and not be missed? Surely....."

"Lord Caldwell, pray do not think it necessary to pay me compliments. They are out of place in such a scene as this, and I am in no mood to listen to them."

"I was not thinking of paying you compliments. It was not for that I have sought you here. It was to speak to you a truth that I have for months been wishing to utter—that I can contain no longer."

"What do you mean?" said Ellen, trembling, for her thoughts instantly reverted to Edward—what could any one have to say to her of importance that did not relate to him?

"Ellen, why do you affect to misunderstand me? Surely, though I have never uttered them in words, you cannot be ignorant of my feelings towards you; you cannot but have known for months past the passionate love I bear you. If you have been indeed so blind, listen to me now when I tell you that I love you more—a thousand times more—than life itself."

Ellen staggered back against the wall, and covered her face with her hands.

"Why do you shrink from me, Ellen!" continued he. "Why do you hide your face from

me? Is it, then, so bitter a thing to hear that you are beloved; or am I so hateful to you, that my love is more painful to hear of than another man's hatred? Then, why did you not tell me this long ago? Why have you deceived me, and allowed me to believe that I was not indifferent to you?"

"No, you are not indifferent—as a friend. I have never thought of you but as a friend. If I deceived you, it was most unconsciously. Forgive me; my head has been so confused of late, I have scarcely known what I did."

"And is this all you have to give me in return for months of devoted attachment? A few cold words, an assurance that I was misunderstood, that you never took the trouble of understanding me. But believe me, it is not with this that I will rest satisfied."

"What can I say? What would you have?" said Ellen, who, weak and nervous from recent illness, was half terrified by the violence of his tone.

"What would I have? Ellen, is this not mockery? Do you not know that love must be repaid with love? It is that which I ask from you. Ellen, dearest Ellen, why do you shrink from me—why turn away as if my presence were loathsome?"

"Oh, leave me, leave me!" exclaimed Ellen, passionately. "You do not know what you ask! You do not know what a withered, blighted, wretched thing you are speaking to! Love! I have none to give. My heart is dry and barren as this parched earth we stand on. I am not what I seem. as well might you love a whited sepulchre, and ask for love in return. Leave me—in mercy, leave me to my misery! I am not fit for any other companionship."

She sank down on the parapet, and sobbed convulsively. Lord Caldwell did not obey her passionate entreaty. He stood beside her in silence. There was a choking sensation in his throat, which, for a moment or two, impeded his utterance.

"Leave me," said Ellen again; "am I not humbled enough, or do you wish to triumph over my humiliation?"

"Ellen, can you suppose that one whose whole heart is devoted to you can triumph in your suffering?" (Lord Caldwell spoke truth; his heart, such heart as he had, *was* hers: he loved her as much as he was capable of loving any thing.) "I *cannot* leave you in such a state as this; and why should you drive me from you? why not rather turn to me as a friend, as a comforter? If you are miserable, is there not a power in affection to soothe misery? I will not again ask you to give me love. I ask you only to give me the right to cherish and protect you. Be mine—only say that you will be mine, and I shall be content to await the time when my persevering love shall win love from you in return."

"No," said Ellen, raising her head, and speaking more firmly than she had hitherto done; "no, it cannot be. I have deceived you once unwittingly; I will not deceive you again. The time you speak of can never come." She went on in a lower and more faltering voice. "I have loved once; I can never love again: the very source of love is dried up. I will not repay your generous affection by darkening your existence with the perpetual sight of my misery. You have prosperity and happiness now and in the future. I have nothing but wretchedness and the grave. Our union would be as the

union of the living and the dead. It can never be. Yet, believe me, that hard and dry as my heart now is, I am not ungrateful, not insensible to your generous, disinterested affection. Willingly, oh! most willingly, would I have given the remainder of my wretched life to have spared you this pain. Forgive me for having caused it: say that you forgive me before we part."

"Part! no, no, we part not thus," exclaimed Lord Caldwell, losing all mastery over herself, in his rage at finding himself foiled in the very hour of his anticipated triumph. "Do you think, Miss Percival, that I am a mere poppet to be played with one moment, and spurned from you the next? By Heaven! if you did, you shall feel how widely you mistook the man you trifled with. Listen to me once more."

"I will listen to nothing spoken in that tone," said Ellen, drawing herself up proudly. "Let me pass, my lord; I will not remain here to be insulted."

But Lord Caldwell placed himself before her, and laid his hand on her arm. She felt that she was in his power, and her heart sank within her, although she maintained her proud attitude. At that moment a party of several people emerged from the deep shadow of the trees behind them; and Mrs. Carew's rather sharp voice was heard exclaiming: "There they are, at last, I declare!"

Lord Caldwell instantly released Ellen's arm with a curse, not loud, but deep, on the unwelcome intruders, whilst Ellen sprang joyfully towards them, as towards deliverers.

"Pretty people you are!" said Mrs. Carew, shaking her fan menacingly, first at one, and then

at the other. "I do not know which to be most angry with; you, Miss Percival, for playing the truant, or you, Lord Caldwell, for deluding me with a promise of bringing the lost sheep back to the fold, and then treacherously aiding and abetting in her defection."

"I am quite ready to return with you now," said Ellen.

"I have no doubt you are, seeing that you cannot help yourself, backed as I am with the lawful authority of Lord Ethelwode, on my right hand, and the authority, by courtesy, of the duke, on my left. But, in sober sadness, I am delighted to have found you. I really began to feel afraid that you might have been tempted by the opportunities of time and place to enact the part of Ophelia; and I expected, every minute, to see Lord Caldwell rushing in *à la Hamlet*, ungrateful and unembraced, to announce the dreadful catastrophe. I am sincerely glad to find you both safe in life and brains, which is more than you deserve, considering the coolness with which you seem to contemplate the risk you have made *me* run of catching my death of cold, in this wild-goose chase after you, in the middle of the night."

"Had we not better, then, go in at once," said Ellen, "and not expose you to any further danger on that account?"

"Thank you for your kind consideration, my dear; but, as I have ventured so far, I feel inclined to try myself the delights of a moonlight promenade. Lord Caldwell, I claim your arm as my champion in the adventure. The duke and Lord Ethelwode will be a sufficient escort to conduct Miss Percival back."

There was no possibility of misunderstanding so broad a hint ; and Lord Caldwell was reluctantly obliged to offer his arm to Mrs. Carew, whilst Ellen returned with the other two gentlemen to the house. She would not, however, re-enter the ball-room, notwithstanding all the duke's solicitations ; and, on the plea of a violent headache, which her pale countenance fully attested, she persuaded Lord Ethelwode, who was nothing loth, to go home with her at once, leaving with the duke a message for Mrs. Carew, when she should return from her moonlight walk.

Never had Ellen been more thankful for her stepfather's taciturnity than during their long, dark, drive home *tête-à-tête*, for she felt that to speak coherently on any subject just then would be a task beyond her powers. Not a word was uttered by either the whole way. Lord Ethelwode had not a doubt that Lord Caldwell had proposed and been accepted that night ; and he was exulting in the prospect of the speedy accomplishment of all his hopes ; and Ellen was left in peace to collect her confused thoughts, and to ponder over the occurrences of that eventful evening.

Though there was much in these occurrences that was most painful to look back upon, an undefined sensation of escape from a great danger predominated over every other feeling. She thought of her prayer on the moonlit terrace ; and, for the first time for many days, a warm thanksgiving rose from her heart to that invisible, forgotten, yet ever-watchful Providence which had been near her and around her in her hour of need. As she now pondered, with calmer thoughts, on the recent events which had changed the whole aspect of her life,

they gradually appeared to her in a different light. Now that her belief in a God had returned to her, her faith in that virtue, which is His image, returned also.

Edward's character, such as it had seemed to her in former days, rose up before her. His truthfulness, his reverence for every human being, how utterly were they at variance with the conduct he appeared to hold towards her! Was it possible, that he should return falsehood, and cold, deliberate insult to her, who had given him her all of love and confidence? Ellen now felt that she could not believe it. Involuntarily she connected Lord Caldwell's declaration of long-existing attachment, with the unaccountable circumstances of her separation from Edward. She remembered the change which his introduction at the castle had produced on Lord and Lady Ethelwode's manner towards Annesley, and the suspicions which she had then entertained against him. As she looked back on the time of doubt and suspense which had preceded the writing of that fatal letter, she traced most of the insinuations which had shaken her trust in her lover to Lord Caldwell. She recollected that Edward's last letter had been kept from her. As she thought over all these circumstances, a trembling hope gradually sprang up in her heart that she might have been deceived, although the extent of the deception which had been practised never occurred to her.

Her first act, when she found herself in her own room, was to look for Edward's letters,—those letters, once valued beyond all price, but which, of late, she had shrank from looking upon, lest the hideous aspect of their falsehood should glare upon

her from every line. She eagerly seized them now, and, as she read them, the conviction grew more and more strongly upon her that she had deceived herself, or allowed others to deceive her, most grossly. Every line bore witness of truth and nobleness of mind, of love unfeigned, unfeignable; and tears of mingled joy and remorse dimmed her sight, and fell fast on those beloved characters. Had Edward appeared before her then, she would have fallen at his feet, and owned the wrong she had done him.

With the conviction of the deception that had been practised upon her, came also an undefined dread of what further might be attempted against her. She felt assured, from the tone of Lord Caldwell's last words, that he had no intention of resting satisfied with her refusal, and dark fears arose, and made her heart sink within her, as she remembered his violence.

Under the influence of these mingled feelings, she hastily seized a pen, and wrote the following lines, as fast as the blinding tears would allow her.

"Edward—dearest Edward, I have been deceived, misled, and I have wronged you bitterly. It is only now that I have acquired the conviction that I have been deceived, and I write to implore your forgiveness—to implore you to return to me, unworthy as I am, and to be to me, once more, as you have been. Oh, Edward! if you could know all I have suffered since I wrote that last, miserable letter, you would feel for me, notwithstanding the wrong I have done you. If you yet love me—if I am not utterly worthless in your eyes—come to me at once; do not write, but come. Your presence alone can save me from danger, from

misery, far worse even than that which I have suffered for the last six weeks. Come, and if you can forget the folly which has caused this misery, all may yet be well with us.

“ ELLEN.”

This letter she put up in a parcel, that it might go by the speedier conveyance of the coach, instead of waiting till the next evening for the post; and having sealed and directed it, she placed it by her bed-side, and lay down to rest, with a heart more at ease than it had been for many weeks.

Her suspicions had been enough awakened, to make her determine to trust no one with the precious packet; and, taking only her maid with her, she took it herself, early the next morning, to the coach-office, which was but a few yards off. Having seen it delivered into the hands of the clerk, and booked, with all due care, she returned homewards, with a feeling of joy that had long been a stranger to it.

She was rather startled, as she came out of the office, to find herself almost face to face with Lord Caldwell and Mademoiselle Juliani, who were so engaged in earnest conversation that they did not perceive her till she passed by them. Mademoiselle Juliani instantly began pouring out a torrent of questions and exclamations, and reasons why and wherefore she was there, and how she had so strangely chanced to meet his lordship, whilst the latter advanced towards Ellen with his usual bland smile; but she turned away from him with a cold brow, and, silencing his companion's loquacity, passed quickly onwards. Her newly-awakened suspicions made her connect this strange circumstance with the deception she believed to have

been practised upon her, and she rejoiced that, in this instance, she had trusted no one but herself.

Two mornings after, Ellen was sitting alone in her room, listening, breathlessly, to every sound, her heart at times leaping within her in joyful hope; at others, the cold chill of doubt and dread making her tremble in every limb, when Mary entered, with a letter in her hand.

"I think this is the answer you have been expecting," said the good creature, who had lived with Ellen since her childhood, in a joyful tone.

Ellen started forward, and then sank back powerless in her chair. Mary put the letter in her hand, and thinking that she would wish to be alone at such a time, she left the room.

She had scarcely gone two steps from the door, when she thought she heard a faint cry within. She hastily ran back, and found Ellen lying senseless on the floor, with the open letter in her hand.

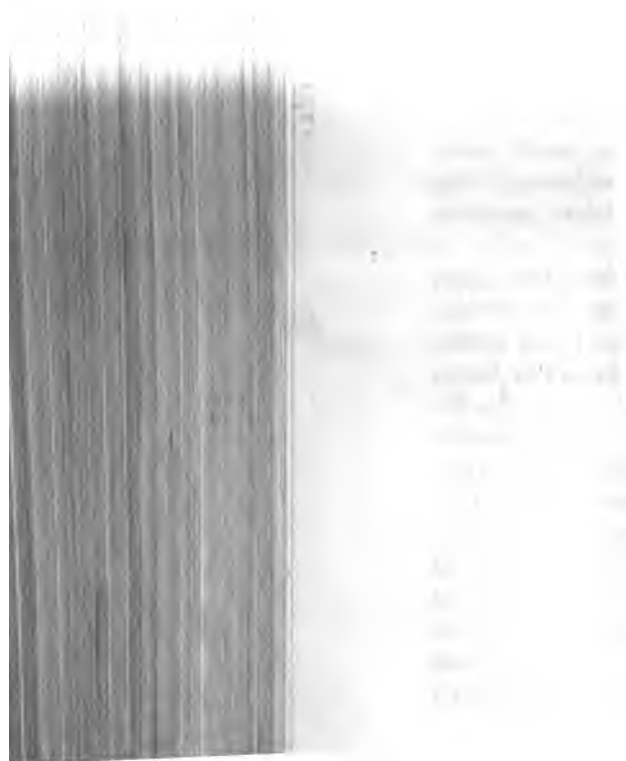
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Lord Caldwell dined that day at Ethelwode House; and his manner to Ellen was more tender, more devoted, than ever. He seemed to have forgotten the scene of the other night, and, if she had not forgotten it, she acted as if she had. When she found herself once more alone in her own room, she was the affianced bride of Lord Caldwell; and she lay down on her bed, with a desperate wish, that she might never leave it again but to be carried to her grave.

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PASSION AND PRINCIPLE.

A NOVEL.

EDITED BY

CAPT. FREDERICK CHAMIER, R.N.

**"Our acts our angels are, or good or ill
The fatal shadows that pursue us still."**

JOHN FLETCHER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PASSION AND PRINCIPLE.

CHAPTER I.

"An ye was left, an orphan bairn,
In this wide world alane."

JOHN BETHUNE.

It is true that we should now return to Oaklands, and the sick room where Louisa was keeping her watch of love. Her task was easy during that night, but the next day, in spite of all her remonstrances, her father would exert himself to give directions about different matters, which, he said, he could not rest till he saw satisfactorily settled. Louisa feared, from his eagerness to do this, that he was not so confident of his recovery as Dr. Curewell had seemed to be; and her own hopes, which had been high till now, began to fail again, as the evening drew on, and her father grew more and more feverish and restless. He dropped off to sleep at last, but his slumbers were short and uneasy; and in the morning, some alarming symptoms again made their appearance; still, he was more himself, and apparently even stronger than the day before; and Louisa struggled hard to over-

come the depression which was weighing on her spirits.

She was in this state of conflicting feelings when the sound of her father's voice, calling her to him, roused her from her uneasy reflections. She was preparing a draught for him, and hastened with it to his bed-side, but he waved it away.

"That is of no use now," said he, languidly; "I want to speak to you, my child; come and sit by me."

"You are not strong enough to speak now, dearest father; wait—"

"No, Louisa, it will no longer be wise for me to wait."

Louisa started as her father's words thus echoed the thought she had scarcely dared acknowledge to herself. She attempted to speak, but her voice failed, and she sank silently on a chair by the bed-side. Her father fondly pressed the hand he held, and resumed, in a faint voice, pausing frequently to recover breath.

"My poor child, you must hear me as calmly as you can. Do not let your grief unman me, and make me unfit to perform my last duty towards you. Yesterday I was deceived, not like you, with the hope of my recovery, and, for many hours, I have felt that the time for earthly hope is past, and through this long night, whilst you have been watching beside me, I have been praying for strength to part from you, my own blessed child, as becomes a Christian, who departs in faith, knowing that he leaves what has been dearer to him than his life in the charge of Him, without whose aid and protection all his own care would have been unavailing. Do we not share this

faith, dearest, and shall we not be strong in its strength?"

Louisa silently knelt down, and kissed his hand; at that moment she could not reply to him in words. There was a few moments' pause, and then the dying man resumed.

"That I leave you at such a time, my child, is the bitterest pang of this hour to me. I might have afforded you comfort, which none other could, and....., but we are too short-sighted to venture to say, one season had been better than another, and, in the dark hour of trial, we know not what happiness may yet be in store for us. Indeed, it is so, dearest," he continued, as Louisa shook her head, despairingly; "when I stood by your mother's death-bed, agonized and hopeless as you stand now beside mine, I felt as if no ray of joy could ever again brighten my lot; but she placed you in my arms, with the solemn injunction to live for you, and you made life once more a scene of blessedness to me." He paused again, overcome by emotion, and when he continued, his voice was weaker and more faltering.

"God knows if I have striven to fulfil your mother's last behest. How far my efforts have been successful it remains for your life to prove; and, in the midst of suffering, it has been a source of deep joy to me, to feel how nobly you have already proved yourself more than worthy of all the care I have bestowed on you. Yes, even your late heavy trial has not been without its blessing, for it has given me, at this hour, a confidence I could not so assuredly have felt before, that your whole soul is subdued to the guidance of lofty principle. Go on then, my child, and God bless

and speed thee, yea, though it be through sorrow and temptation, and thy crown shall be a crown of rejoicing!"

The sick man had exhausted all his strength in those last words of comfort to his child; he sank back, and closed his eyes. Louisa started up in terror, but his hour was not yet come; he gradually revived, and spoke again, although Louisa, who saw how unequal he was to the exertion, entreated him to desist from it at present.

"No, my child," was his reply to her entreaties; "I cannot be silent now; whether my thread of life breaks a few hours sooner or later is of little consequence; but I would not leave you without saying all which I think may be of use or comfort to you. There are, also, more worldly matters to speak about: you have long known that you cannot inherit my estate; that must pass into other hands, and we will pray together," added he, pressing her hand, in token that he felt how full of pain the reflection must be to her; "that *he* may not prove neglectful of the great responsibility thus devolved upon him. I leave you independent, however, for the savings of many years have been accumulating for you, and you will be rich enough for every comfort, though deprived, perhaps, of some of the luxuries you have been accustomed to."

"Father, do not speak of these things," exclaimed Louisa, in incontrollable agony; there seemed a bitter mockery to her in wasting any of those last precious moments on such insignificant topics: but her father could not rest till he had spoken on every point he thought essential to her future comfort, and given directions which he felt

it would have been madness to postpone. He was now anxious to know if there were any letters for him. He wished to leave nothing unsettled; nothing that could add, after he was gone, to his child's burden of care and sorrow. He was in hopes there might be a letter from Reginald, who had only written him a few hasty lines since his departure, and he longed for strength to write once more to his adopted son; but this was impossible, and he gave a long message to Louisa for him, charging her to write to him, and, forgetting all their late differences, to address him in the same affectionate, sisterly manner as of old. The thought occurred, how full of comfort, in that hour of separation, would have been the assurance, that he left his child to the love and protection of Reginald; but it had been otherwise ordained, and it was not at the close of his life, that the faithful Christian would begin to repine at the decrees of Heaven.

Louisa had sent, by his desire, for all the letters which had come, since their return home. There was none from Reginald, and both felt pained at his silence. There were two or three from different friends, and one from Mr. Eagle, Sir Charles's solicitor, which he begged her to read, in case there should be any thing in it requiring an immediate answer.

The room was darkened, and she went to the window to obtain more light. Her face was thus concealed from her father, and he did not perceive the sudden expression of surprise, amounting to dismay, which passed over it, as she glanced her eye rapidly over the letter. His ear caught,

however, her half-suppressed exclamation, and he anxiously asked if any thing was the matter.

“No—nothing,” she replied, making a violent effort over herself. She picked up the letter she had let fall, and, returning to her father’s side, told him, in a calm voice, that Mr. Eagle acknowledged the receipt of his last letter, and would attend to his instructions. Her father was satisfied, and closed his eyes, as if to sleep, whilst she remained in the same position, still evidently struggling with the sudden agitation the solicitor’s letter had thrown her into.

Sir Charles soon roused himself from his momentary drowsiness. He had still much to say; and he felt acutely how much that was pressing for utterance must be left unsaid—how vain and frivolous were all his previous advice and exhortations to those, which, in that solemn hour, the light of eternity already dawning on his soul, he would fain have given! And faithless thoughts could not all be kept out; and fears lest all his care should have been ineffectual to fit his child for the task before her.

So young, so inexperienced, so friendless, to whom could she turn for guidance and advice, when his voice was silent in the grave? Who would comfort her in this new and worst affliction? who would feel for her and cheer her in her desolation? It was a heavy trial—an awful conflict—this the last of his mortal career! In the whole of human experience there is not a more difficult exercise of faith than that the dying parent is called upon to make.

It is comparatively an easy task to submit our own fate in perfect acquiescence to the will of God

—but to trust the destinies of the beloved one we have watched and tended, to whom we have been as a second Providence—to give up, unrepiningly, the charge of our child's happiness, and fearlessly launch the cradle of bulrushes on the troubled stream—this is, indeed, a trial of the strongest faith, and blessed are those who come out victorious from the conflict!

This trial was now drawing fast to a close for Sir Charles Conway. In vain Louisa hoped against hope—and watched, with agonized anxiety, for Dr. L.'s arrival, in the last vain trust that new remedies, greater skill, might still be availing to check the disease. Towards evening a decided change for the worse took place; the most alarming symptoms returned, when the patient's strength was too much exhausted to struggle against their insidious progress; and when, at length, Dr. L. did arrive, it was only in time to devote his care to Louisa, who had been carried insensible to her own room, after her father had expired in her arms.

CHAPTER II.

“Forsaken, but patient one! Misknown and mistrusted! Think not of the times when thou hadst hope of better than the present, and repent the noble pride of thy heart never! It is not always our duty to marry, but it is always our duty to abide by right, and not to purchase happiness by loss of honour; not to avoid unweddedness by untruthfulness.”—*Jean Paul*.—From CARLYLE'S *Miscellaneous Writings*.

Several days passed, and Louisa still remained in a most precarious state. Fever and excessive weakness succeeded each other; and Dr. L., who had known her from a child, became seriously alarmed about her, and determined not to return to town till he could leave her convalescent.

Meanwhile, preparations for the funeral had been going forward; but, as Sir Charles had left no other directions than what might be contained in his will, and as Louisa was unfit to give any, an early day was fixed for the opening of the will; and St. John, who had hurried back to England on the first news of Sir Charles's death, was summoned, as heir-at-law, to attend.

Little did poor Louisa think whose carriage it was driving up to the door, when its sudden noise, breaking the death-like stillness of the house, roused her from the torpor into which she had sunk: little did she think that he, whom she had so unceasingly called upon in her ravings, was even now in the house, and listening anxiously to the

account of her sufferings. This first awaking to outward events ended Louisa's blessed unconsciousness; the last link between the internal and the external world was restored, and she gradually woke to a full sense of her misery. But we will not dwell upon this dreadful moment. As the first awaking out of sleep on the morrow of some fearful event, when we try to persuade ourselves that it was all the horrid phantasm of a dream, so was poor Louisa's return to consciousness, as the feeling of her utter desolation slowly crept over her, and grew more and more distinct.

Not long, however, did she give way, unresistingly, to her misery; the very feeling of her isolation impressed her the more with the necessity of rallying all her strength, and she once more rose superior to the bodily weakness which, while her mind lay dormant, had crushed her to the earth. In spite of old Sarah's remonstrances, she insisted on leaving her bed before her nurse thought she was fit to move; but there was a stern resolution to be strong, which could not fail to conquer; and, when Dr. L. next came to her room, he found her up and dressed and sitting alone, having dismissed Sarah, who had nursed her with a mother's tenderness, to get some rest, whilst she girded up her strength in solitude and prayer.

Dr. L. was fearful, lest, in this mood of unnatural calmness, she should make any inquiries which he should be forced to answer; he felt that any fresh agitation would throw her back into a worse state than that from which she had recovered. She made none, however; she could not command her voice, in spite of all her efforts; and thus she remained in ignorance of all that had tal

during her illness. Her strongest motive for the exertion she was now making appeared when she consulted Dr. L. on the possibility of her immediate removal from Oaklands. There were reasons, she said, with some difficulty pronouncing the words, which made it painful for her to remain in the house, which was no longer to be her home. But the physician forbade all thoughts of moving for the present, and, fearing any further discussion on the subject, left the room.

When he was gone, she reproached herself for not having asked the questions which trembled on her lips. When was the funeral to be? Surely it was not over! The thought came over her, as the pang of a fresh separation; had they carried her father out, and laid him in the grave without allowing her one more look? The idea got possession of her mind, and she could not banish it; this very day, perhaps, might be fixed, and they had told her nothing about it. She started up—she would satisfy herself; she felt an aching desire to see his features once more, and, after a few minutes' hesitation, she resolved to go to his room. It was in the same passage; she should have strength to go so far; and seizing the moment when she was alone, and perfect silence reigned in the house, she noiselessly slipped out of her own apartment, and proceeded, though with slow and feeble steps, towards her father's.

When she reached the door, she paused for a moment before she could gather strength to enter; then, opening it softly, with the involuntary feeling which we have in the vicinity of the dead, as though mortal sounds could still disturb their rest, in another moment she was standing once more in

the place which for three days and nights she had scarcely left ; and he whom she had then watched so anxiously, lay before her cold and stiff ; the features she had seen so lately contracted with mortal agony, now relaxed into the rigid placidity of death. As she lifted the cloth with which the face was covered, a ray of sunshine, straggling through the closed shutters, fell upon it, lighting it up, as it were, with a smile to greet her last farewell.

She gazed for a few minutes on those beloved features, then knelt down, and prayed that the blessing which those lips had implored for her with their last breath might descend upon her head, and guide and cheer her on her lonesome way. She rose when her prayer was ended, and replacing the cloth after one long fond gaze, she turned slowly to leave the room. She felt faint and sick ; in that solemn chamber she could not shed a tear, and her heart seemed ready to burst with the woe it could not express. She reached the door, and gently closed it after her, and was about to return to her own room, when she was startled by the sound of an approaching footstep. She looked up, and St. John stood before her. She staggered back against the door, for her limbs refused to carry her ; her ideas grew confused, her brain whirled round, and she would have fallen to the ground, had not St. John caught her in his arms.

With a deep moan, she presently recovered her senses, and gradually perceiving her situation, with a sudden impulse started from him ; but her head was still confused, and she began talking hurriedly.

"I am very weak still, you see ; I have been very ill, but I thought I was better. I am return-

ing to my own room—that which was my own,” she repeated, correcting herself. “I do not know what I am saying; but I know it is all yours, and I am going soon—very soon.”

“Louisa, for God’s sake do not go on speaking so!” cried Arthur, horror-struck at the change in her since they last parted, and at the fearful weakness to which she seemed reduced; “do not talk of going; call every thing here your own. Can you think I wish to turn you out?”

“No, no,” said Louisa, becoming more conscious of what she was saying, and making an effort to recover her self-possession; “but I wish to move as soon as I am able: now I must be quiet. Will you let me pass? Indeed, I am not able to speak;” and her agitated voice and nervous utterance confirmed the truth of these words.

“You terrify me, Louisa,” cried St. John; “let me assist you. I had no idea how ill you had been, though I have been anxious, most anxious, about you.”

Louisa’s agitation increased visibly.

“I will not detain you now,” he continued, “but promise to see me soon; there is much that I must say to you.”

“Our last words have been spoken,” gasped out Louisa.

“Nay, I must, I will see you again!” he cried, impetuously. “You reminded me that this house is mine, and you shall not leave it without granting me an interview.” Then, reproaching himself for the effect his peremptory tone produced on Louisa’s shattered nerves, he continued in softer accents, “In the name of him who lies there,” pointing to

the chamber of death, "I conjure you to see me once more!"

Louisa could bear no more; she silently assented, for she could not trust her voice; and then, with trembling steps, regained her own apartment.

The next day had been fixed for the funeral; and at the appointed hour, the melancholy procession passed through the gates of Oaklands, and through the village, to the little churchyard, where Edward Annesley was awaiting it to begin the solemn service in which earth is returned to earth, and the spirit commended to Him who gave it.

It was soon concluded; and the crowd which had assembled round the grave of him who, as landlord, benefactor, friend, was loudly and universally regretted, slowly dispersed, whilst many a heart was full, and many an eye dimmed with tears. Not a few also amongst them turned eagerly to scan the appearance and demeanour of St. John, who had appeared as chief mourner, anxious to read in his countenance how far he would prove a worthy successor of him who was gone; then, as they remembered his frequent visits in the course of the last year, and his constant attendance on Miss Conway in her rides and walks, a hope was confidently expressed in many a cottage, that she might still remain amongst them.

Meanwhile, St. John had returned to Oaklands, to while away as he could the remainder of the day, feeling that he could not with decency ask Louisa to see him so soon; and he resigned himself with the best grace he could to the delay. But the next day, and the next, passed away, and the same answer was still returned to his entreaties, "Miss Conway was not well enough to see him." Dr.

L. confirmed the statement; he wished his patient to avoid all agitating conversation, and he had seen enough of both parties to know that such theirs was likely to be. Perhaps St. John thought in his secret heart, that his words would have a spell to soothe her sufferings; certain it is, that he nursed himself with hopes, and that he longed more than ever for her presence.

Things had changed since they parted; Louisa was now in sorrow, softened by long affliction; she was lonely also, and desolate in the world; would she then turn again from the only being she loved? for she did love him; she had confessed it even in her last letter, and he had treasured up the words; and when, since he had plunged into the dissipation of Paris, to forget the pain of her refusal, and the many difficulties which surrounded him, and which he had not moral courage to face, those words had come back to his mind as some soothing talisman, and recalled him, for a time at least, to a better mood; and when he was suddenly summoned to England, hope sprang up once more, fresh and green, in his heart.

Unwilling as Louisa felt to encounter the trying interview she had promised, she at length grew weary herself of the vain delay, and impatient to leave Oaklands. She returned a favourable answer to his prayer for admittance, and in a few minutes he was in the room. As she rose to receive him, with evident effort, St. John sprang towards her, and gently forced her to reseal herself, and placed himself beside her.

"Are you really better, Louisa?" he said, looking anxiously at her pale face, and attenuated form. "I fear not much."

"Oh yes, I am really better—stronger—I feel equal to travel now, and I wish to leave this place in a few days, which is the reason why I said I would see you this morning."

"Move in a few days? this is madness," cried St. John. "I cannot allow it, I am sure Dr. L. does not approve of such a plan, you must not think of it. I am going to-morrow; I have only waited to see you, but you must remain, you must make this your home, as long as—as long as you please. Oh Louisa, why not for ever?"

"Mr. St. John, spare me, I am not fit for this—for any—agitating conversation. Whether you remain here or not, this is no longer a place for me; my mind will be quieter when I am away—but I feel your kindness."

"Kindness! are such cold measured words to be used between us? you treat me as a stranger, when my whole soul is yours, Louisa! I have suffered repulse, mortification, scorn, from you, but even these cannot destroy the love I bear you. I return to you the same in feeling, as when last we parted in this house. Do you remember that evening? do you remember, words and tones which I can never forget, and which formed a tie between us, we would in vain try to break? all that has passed since, I would obliterate. Louisa, answer me now, as you would have done then."

"Mr. St. John," said Louisa, making a strong effort to command herself, "it was not for this that I consented to see you. I hoped, when you saw how reluctant I was to admit you, that you would understand my feelings, and spare me this. Indeed, I need no fresh addition to my sorrow."

"Oh, that I could bear it all for you, dearest!"

cried St. John, passionately, "and though it were twice as heavy, I would bear it with joy; but why turn so coldly from me? that, alone, I have not courage to endure."

"This is ungenerous," said Louisa, in a tone of deep emotion, whilst she struggled to be calm; "do not force me to repeat what it is, perhaps, more painful for me to say, than for you to hear. You speak of repulse, mortification, but you know if they were wantonly inflicted."

He did know it, and this it was which gave him hope; he urged the madness of struggling against herself; he even alluded to the evident effects that struggle had produced in her, and the proud blood mounted for a moment to Louisa's cheek, and left it again more marble in its hue than before.

"I have treasured up," continued he, "your last sad confession of affection, which softened to me even the bitterness of your other words, and I have dared to hope that it might yet become the foundation of our happiness."

"I do not dream of happiness," said Louisa, in a hollow voice; "my path is straight, but thorny, indeed!"

"But do you know *all* its thorns?" asked Arthur, anxiously, and in a tone which implied that there was some hidden meaning in his words.

"What do you mean?"

"Do you know? but this is no time to tell you—you are too weak to hear it."

"I have borne too much to sink before any evil news you can bring me now," replied Louisa, "but if you mean to ask whether I know that hence-

forth poverty, as well as loneliness, is to be my lot, I have known it some time."

"You have known it? You know that in the failure of R.'s bank, the whole of your property was lost, I fear irrecoverably? You know that, with the exception of the furniture of this house, you are left destitute?" cried Arthur, incredulously, and watching the effect of his communication.

"I was not aware I had even so much," replied Louisa; "the news of the failure I received before my father's death; fortunately, he did not attempt to read the letter himself, and I had, at least, the comfort of knowing that he died in ignorance of this matter."

And so it was; the letter which caused Louisa's agitation, the last day of her father's illness, announced the loss which reduced her from affluence to beggary; and, for a moment, as we have seen, she was almost surprised into betraying herself before her father, but another reflection, and a successful effort over herself, enabled her to keep the secret, the knowledge of which would have embittered his last hours. Since then, in her utter misery, her change of fortune had seemed only as a slight ingredient in the cup, and she was able to speak of it with the utmost calmness. But to St. John this calmness, under such a misfortune, seemed so inexplicable, that he could not yet believe that she knew the whole extent of her loss, and he enlarged upon it again.

"It seems so slight a misfortune to me, after all I have suffered of late," said Louisa, in an accent of misery which struck him to the soul, "that I cannot tremble at the thoughts of it."

When the world is become desolate, what matter if one's habitation be a poor or a rich one? Oh, Arthur," she continued, with an involuntary burst of feeling, "to know what I feel now, you must have stood by the death-bed of your last earthly support."

"And yet, Louisa, you disdain that which should be yours through every change and trial of life. I bow to the justice of your decree as regards myself; I feel myself more than ever unworthy of you—in all but love. Oh! let not your excessive scruples drive you lonely, and poor, and unprotected, into this desolate world. Here, at your feet, I abjure every error you can complain of. You shall guide me aright—you shall make me what you please, so that you will but give me the right to cherish and protect you. Do not speak hastily; I will leave you now, if you wish it; you shall reflect as long as you think necessary; but, Louisa! reject me not again—drive not yourself to ruin, and me to desperation; I plead for us both....."

During this impassioned appeal, Louisa had been strongly agitated; but, at length, gathering strength to speak, she said, in a low voice, as she turned away to avoid meeting his glance,

"Happiness is not for me—the time is past! nothing has changed since we parted last, except my external position; and did you believe that would influence me where.....principle bade me resist before? No," she continued, with a bitter smile, while her voice sank almost to a whisper; "when I first tore those visions of happiness from my heart, I made a stronger effort than is required now to face the actual struggles of life."

"Louisa ! this is mockery," cried Arthur, vehemently.

"No, no—would it were !" she said, in the same tone, and still speaking almost involuntarily ; but, then, recollecting herself, and a deep flush passing over her face, she continued. "But I am wrong to speak thus ; you see I am weak—still.....I—I am not used to have so little command over myself ; and you surely will not take advantage of it?" She raised her eyes to him as she spoke ; and, in the conflict between her pride and her weakness, her manner resumed all its calm dignity, demanding respect for her feelings, and aweing his impetuosity to silence ; but it was only for a moment ; he chafed against the curb to which he was forced to submit ; he began to feel it as a degradation to sue to a woman who thus obstinately rejected him ; he was irritated, almost beyond control, by the power which awed him, and he was about to burst out, when Louisa interrupted him.

"I must leave you now. I feel this has been too much for me," she said, in low, broken accents. "We part now for ever.....for long years, at least our paths lie henceforth wide apart ; may Heaven guide you to the right one, and—and may your course be blessed !"

Tears trembled in her eyes as she spoke ; but he was too much blinded by passion to see them. He had bit his lips to restrain himself whilst she was speaking ; but the tenderness of her tone had no power to soften him now ; and, as she rose, with evident effort, to leave the room, he grasped her arm sternly to detain her.

"I will not force you to leave me—I will myself deliver you from the presence which is so odious to

you. Hear only my last words, they shall be few. On you," he continued, losing the forced calmness of his tone—"on you rest all the evil consequences of this unnatural separation—on you the responsibility of wrenching asunder the ties of feeling—ties, which should have been holier than those of blood—ties, which might have bound me again, as with a holy band, to the path of virtue. In pride have you cast me from you, in pride have you stifled your own affection, and rejoiced when you betrayed the fewest signs of feeling; may that pride be your reward! And when, in penury and loneliness, you think of your once happy home, may you think, also, with bitterness, that it might still have been yours; and remember this hour, and him to whom you have also made this home a desolate one! When you hear that this house is falling to ruin, that the dependents whom you have cared for are neglected, and the noble inheritance of your forefathers squandered far away, then think of this hour, and of him whom you have henceforth made an outcast from all that is good!

"Yes," he continued, and a smile of bitter triumph curled his lip, "when, day after day, mental suffering (for I know you *must* suffer) weighs down your strength, and makes you more unfit for your rude struggle, and you secretly mourn over the hopes of other days, then remember this hour—and may that recollection be another and a deeper pang to that proud heart! Farewell!" and, without another look, he threw from him the arm he had seized, and rushed from the room.

Louisa had remained motionless while he spoke, pale as marble, and her dark eyes, now deprived of all their fire, fixed upon him with an expression of

horror and despair, which nothing but the extreme madness of rage could have made him overlook. The sound of the closing door, as it slammed violently to, startled her from the dreadful trance in which she seemed fixed. She sprang forward.

“Arthur!” she exclaimed, in an agonized tone, and fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER III.

"*Mother.* She's married—*married.*
Jeronimo. Pshaw! I know it;
 Am I not—broken-hearted?"

BARRY CORNWALL.

"A calm
 So desolate, that the most clamorous grief
 Had nought to envy him within."

The Two Foscari.

"My dear Mrs. Allen, how very kind of you to admit me," said Mrs. Fanshaw, in a tone of fussy condolence, as she bustled into the quiet drawing-room at the parsonage. "I was afraid you might not feel equal to receiving visitors, although I felt sure you would see me if you could see any body."

"What should make you doubt my admitting you?" said Mrs. Allen, with a look of surprise. "I am perfectly well, and Mr. Allen's illness is not such, thank God, as to prevent me seeing any one in a quiet way."

"Oh! I was not thinking of illness, bodily illness, at least: but, the 'mind diseased,' you know, is sometimes a worse thing. Well, I am very glad to see you bear up so well."

"What can you mean? I have nothing to bear up against, that I know of, except a little fatigue, now and then, from sitting up at night with Mr.

Allen, and a little worry at seeing Edward less cheerful, at times, than he used to be."

"Ah! that is just the thing. Poor Mr. Annesley! I thought he was looking very pale when I met him just now; but I was quite astonished to see him out at all after such a blow—so very recent too. He could only have heard of it this morning."

"What are you alluding to, Mrs. Fanshaw? I know of nothing that Edward has heard this morning to grieve him."

"Have you seen the Morning Post to-day?" inquired Mrs. Fanshaw, in a solemn tone.

"No; we do not take it in."

"Ah! that accounts for it all. You have not heard it yet. I really am grieved to be the first person to bring you the news. However, I thought you might not have heard it; and, in that case, it would be better the matter should be broken to you by a friend than that it should burst upon you without preparation."

"For Heaven's sake, Mrs. Fanshaw," exclaimed Mrs. Allen, now seriously alarmed, "tell me at once what has happened, what you are speaking of."

"Now, pray do not alarm yourself; I will find it for you directly. I brought the paper with me, you see, thinking you might not take it in. Very fortunate I did, as it turns out. Hem! where is it? His Majesty's theatre—Levee on Wednesday; no, it is not in this column—Marriages in high life; here it is! I had better read it to you, perhaps; it will save you the trouble of putting on your spectacles."

Mrs. Allen made no attempt to interfere. With an inward prayer for strength to bear any evil

tidings which might await her, she sat in silence, whilst Mrs. Fanshaw began reading, with her pompous emphasis, the following paragraph:—

“Yesterday, at St. George’s church, Hanover Square, the Right Hon. Viscount Caldwell led to the hymeneal altar the beautiful and accomplished Miss Percival, only daughter of the late James Percival, Esq., and of Lady Ethelwode. The ceremony was performed by the Right Reverend the Bishop of London; and afterwards the nuptial party, which consisted of the *élite* of the fashionable world, were entertained on a magnificent scale at Ethelwode House. Immediately after the breakfast, the noble and happy pair left town for the Continent, where they are expected to remain during the ensuing autumn and winter.”

“Thank Heaven!” ejaculated Mrs. Allen, as Mrs. Fanshaw ceased reading, “they are not coming to the abbey.”

“Thank Heaven, indeed! I really could not endure the sight of that flighty, flirty Miss Percival—Lady Caldwell, I mean—after her infamous conduct to Mr. Annesley. I fancy there is not much chance of their ever coming here. I met Lord Ethelwode’s agent this morning; and, as I stopped to talk to him about this marriage, he told me that Lord Caldwell had made over the abbey again to Lord Ethelwode. He refused to do it for years, you know, which made Lord Ethelwode hate him as he did; and no one could understand why they made it up so suddenly last winter, and got, all at once, as thick as mustard. But, I suppose this marriage was already in the wind, and they were all in a plot together against poor Mr. Annesley.”

As she spoke, Mrs. Allen remembered the circum-

stances which had attended Lord Caldwell's sudden reconciliation to his ancient enemy; and she could not help thinking that there might be some truth in Mrs. Fanshaw's surmises.

"They are all an odious set together," continued that lady, whose loquacity flowed for thin full tide during her companion's silence. "Lord Ethelwode is the most hateful man I have ever met with. His pride is really unendurable. As to Miss Per—— (Lady Caldwell I should say) she never was a favourite of mine. I always thought she would play Mr. Annesley false, from the moment I saw her flirting so desperately with Lord Caldwell one night at Oaklands. I shall positively hate her now."

Mrs. Allen could not trust herself just then to speak of Ellen, and Mrs. Fanshaw went on.

"So unfeeling, so abrupt, to turn round suddenly, in that way, without any previous notice!"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Mrs. Allen, who could not let even her worst enemy be spoken of unjustly. "In this case, Miss Percival has not turned suddenly round. It is more than two months since her engagement to my son was broken off. She was at perfect liberty to marry whom she pleased."

"You are very kind to take her defence; that certainly alters the case a little; but I shall always think she behaved infamously. Well, I must run away now. I am glad to have been of some use in breaking the matter, and pray tell Mr. Annesley how deeply I feel for him."

"Could you leave me that paper? he might wish to see it."

"Oh! certainly, certainly! there is the paragraph, you see, in the third column, under the head

of fashionable intelligence. By the way, what sad doings there have been at Oaklands ! Have you seen Miss Conway since poor dear Sir Charles's death ?"

"She is still very ill in bed. I should have gone to her, but that I have scarcely strength to do all that Mr. Allen requires. Poor Louisa ! my heart bleeds when I think of her desolation."

"And I hear she is not going to marry Mr. St. John, after all ; though every body said he came down on purpose to propose to her ; and some people were rather shocked at the idea of love-making going on in the house before her father was cold in his grave. I understand, however, that she is not left quite so well off as it was expected she would be ; and, I suppose, he broke it off for that reason. Poor thing ! I am sorry for her. It is a terrible fall for her pride. Well, I must not stand talking here any longer. Good bye, good bye ! pray, do not forget my message to poor dear Mr. Annesley."

Away bustled Mrs. Fanshaw, to carry the news of Ellen's marriage to every house in the neighbourhood where the "Morning Post" was not likely to have been seen ; whilst Mrs. Allen, whose notions of breaking evil tidings to a friend were somewhat different from hers, remained, pondering anxiously on the means of softening, as much as possible, this inevitable and heavy blow to her beloved Edward, and more anxiously still on its consequences to his already deeply-wounded spirit.

For such as love to watch the working of the same passions in different natures, it would have been a sight of no small interest, to mark the opposite manner in which Edward and Reginald met and endured the same affliction. Reginald's proud

and impetuous nature had encountered sorrow in the spirit of fierce defiance, and

“ With an accent tuned in self-same key,
Returned to chiding fortune.”

He had sought to deaden the sting he could not extract by the fiercest bodily and mental exertion, and he chafed, in hot indignation, at the weakness he could not overcome.

Not so was it with Edward. So calmly, so stilly, did he meet the blow which annihilated the bright fabric of love and hope, on which he had centred his all of earthly happiness, that most people would have thought that he scarcely felt it. Yet, could any eye have scanned the secrets of that deep heart, it had found there, perhaps, even a heavier sorrow than Reginald's; heavier, in that it was an impossible thing, to such a nature, to relieve the inward pressure by any outward demonstrations of grief; and his sorrow lay at his heart's core, hidden, intense, like a smouldering fire, slowly and secretly consuming all around it, and drying up the very sources of life itself.

After the first stunning effects of the blow were over, he went on his way again, as usual, mingling with his fellow-men, waiting with the same diligence on his ministry. Why should he have sought solitude, or silence? There was solitude and silence enough in his own heart, for the voice of hope had ceased to utter there its gladsome music, and the loved image which had dwelt therein, and peopled it with happy thoughts, was defaced and broken. It was in that desert place that he met and wrestled with his sorrow, face to

face, night and day, alone, or in company ; whilst few, none, perhaps, but his watchful, love-taught grandmother, guessed that beneath that calm outward aspect was concealed a strife for life and death.

CHAPTER IV.

"Farewell, thou blessed home of happy years,
Sanctuary of peace. And, with thee, farewell
To life's best joys and hopes—for me they've bloomed
Within thy bowers alone—and now I leave thee,
For ever leave thee, and all henceforth is drear."

Dr. L. was right in dreading any fresh agitation for Louisa. The excitement she had gone through, in her last trying interview with St. John, brought on fever again, and for many days she was in a worse state than that into which she had sunk upon the death of her father. When, at length, her youth and strong constitution triumphed, she awoke to life, and life's misery, with cold, blighted feelings, and stern indifference to all things. She could not weep; the recollection of what she had suffered, and of the last dreadful scene especially, only provoked a bitter smile—a smile it would have wrung any heart to behold—but admitted not of the relief of tears.

Dr. L. who had left her for a week, when she was out of danger, was alarmed, on his return, at the unnatural change; it was awful to see one so young struggling thus fiercely with her misery. Before, she had subdued her feelings for her father's sake, and had found strength for her task in his cheering sympathy; but now, he was gone, and what had she to live for?—he was gone, and Ar-

thur had left her almost with a curse upon his lips; who, then, was left to care whether she bore her heavy burden in bitterness or in hope? In this mood her change of fortune was almost welcome; her misery would be hidden from the eyes of the world; she should have a rightful cause to forsake it for ever, and hear its false judgments and mocking laugh no more!

One anxious wish harassed her, a restless desire to leave Oaklands; and she made incredible efforts, the moment she was able to leave her bed, to prove to Dr. L., and her anxious old nurse, that she was fit to move. But they would not be persuaded, and she was obliged, though reluctantly, to confess that they were right, and that she had overrated her strength. There were other things also, and more than enough to try it, before that last great effort was made.

Since her father's death, she had opened no letters, and seen no one; and though, once or twice, it had seemed strange to her that Ellen should have been silent during her affliction, she had not dwelt upon the thought, she felt no wish for sympathy—what sympathy would reach such misery as hers? Now, however, she felt that the heap of letters, which had accumulated upon her table, must be looked at, and she turned to the melancholy task of opening, one after the other, letters of condolence, variously expressed, and more or less sincere, but still characterised by the same monotony of sorrow. Amongst them was a long epistle from Lady Frances Montague, but this Louisa turned from with disgust; her language, on such an occasion, needed not to be seen; the very recollection of her tone brought irritation to

Louisa's nerves. At length she saw Ellen's writing, and her hand trembled as she took the letter. She, at least, would speak with affection and true feeling, and Louisa's heart felt less cold at the thought. She opened it, but its tone startled her: she hastily glanced over the pages, and it fell out of her hand as the signature, "Ellen Caldwell," met her eye.

What could be the meaning of this? What fearful change had come over her friend, while she had been too much engrossed by her own affliction to heed it? Where, then, was Mr. Annesley? Where was Ellen's love—so entire, so passionate as it had seemed? had it all passed away, as a beautiful dream, to change to such realities as these? Ellen Lord Caldwell's wife! it was impossible; the thing was too sudden; she must have been driven to madness before she could consent to such a union; and now, as she read her letter, such a fearful tone of excitement ran through it, such a bitter stifling of feeling, even whilst she expressed her sympathy for her friend, that Louisa began to fear her mind had indeed been too much wrought upon.

That she had been unfairly, foully dealt by before she consented to give up him she had so fondly loved, did not, in Louisa's mind, admit of a doubt; and she eagerly sought again amongst the letters in hopes that another from Ellen might throw some light upon the mystery. There was none, however, among those before her; but she recollected that, when she had sent, the last day of her father's illness, for all the letters that had come since their return home, she had put aside such as were for herself, and had afterwards laid them in a table-drawer with Mr. Eagle's note. There she now

searched, and her eye fell upon Ellen's seal, though the writing was so changed she could scarcely have known it. She tore it open, and the whole extent of poor Ellen's misery was at once revealed to her.

Her fearful excitement, bordering on madness—the wild tumult of feelings, from which every thing soft and tender had fled—the scornful bitterness, as she alluded to the past, and the dread with which she shrank from the future, to which some awful power seemed hurrying her, disclosed to Louisa much of the secret history of the last two months. The letter announced her marriage, which was to take place in a week from the time she wrote. It was easy to see that she was allowed no time to pause, no opportunity for better thoughts. Some fearful spell was upon her; and Louisa thought, with anguish, that a few words of calm truth, of affectionate warning, might have broken that spell, and she had been unable to utter them; she might perhaps have saved her, and she had been forcibly separated from her.

It was with bitter sorrow that she saw how, during that short separation, that nature, once so tender, so pure, so confiding, had been withered and changed. She could not at once answer Ellen's last letter; she must regain some composure before she could write to her in terms fitting for Lord Caldwell's wife to read; but she remained, pondering over her friend's fate and that of Edward, of whose grief she needed not to be told, till her own misery was for a time almost forgotten.

Louisa's sudden reverse of fortune was soon generally known, and she received invitations from several friends of her father's to go to them till her future plans should be settled; but she turned, with

invincible repugnance, from all thoughts of accepting such offers. Lady Catherine St. John had been foremost among those who had thus written ; and Louisa felt that her society would at that moment have been the least irksome to her ; but it was impossible, after all that had passed between Mr. St. John and herself, that she should become an inmate of his aunt's house, and she therefore declined her offer, as she had done the others.

It soon became evident, however, that she must adopt some plan of this kind, for a time, at least, as her affairs were far from being settled. The furniture at Oaklands, her only property, had not yet been valued ; it was not even known whether it was to be sold or not ; and Louisa found that a small sum of money, which was in her father's desk, and her own quarter's allowance, which she had fortunately received shortly before his illness, were all she had now to live upon till her affairs should be settled, and it should be ascertained what was the actual amount of the pittance she would henceforth call her own. When this sad necessity became evident, she turned to the perusal of a letter from her aunt, which she had received that morning.

Lady Frances had discovered that Lady Catherine St. John had written to invite Louisa, and she therefore thought it proper to do the same. It would not look at all well if her dear sister's child did not seek her first refuge in her house ; accordingly, she had written, and, with her usual *étalage* of sentiment, had offered her dear niece a home in her house, and all the sympathy which she, and she only, could be expected to feel for the sorrow of one who had always been so dear to her. Her dear girls joined with her in the most anxious wish to see their cou-

sin, and would have written her that they felt too deeply for her to express their condolence in words. This would sound so much better, thought Lady Frances, than to say that they had no time to write to their cousin, because they were hastening to the great fancy fair, where Minna was to assist in keeping a stall, with great effect, as she hoped, her deep mourning being peculiarly becoming to her fair complexion.

As Louisa read this plausible effusion of sentimentality, her dislike to becoming an inmate in her aunt's house increased tenfold; but she now felt, for the first time, one of the worst pangs of poverty—the necessity of silencing the feelings, and submitting to what our pride is ready to call degradation. There was no choice left her; and, after a long conflict, Louisa answered her aunt's letter, accepting for a short time the invitation she had been kind enough to send her.

This letter being despatched, she began her necessary preparations for leaving the house, which till now had been her home. Her first task was to dismiss the servants; and, with most of them, it was an easy one, as the death of Sir Charles naturally broke up the establishment; but it was a different matter with her own maid and old Sarah. She sent first for the former, and acquainted her that she no longer required her services. The woman, who had lived with her for some years, started with astonishment; and then, thinking that Miss Conway might wish for a cheaper servant, now that she would no longer go out so much, she declared that she would rather live with her for lower wages, than seek another mistress.

This was the first time Louisa had been called upon to make the actual confession of her poverty,

and she felt some difficulty in doing so. But soon ashamed of her shame, she frankly acknowledged her position, and said that, with the scanty portion which would henceforth be her all, she could no longer afford to keep *any* maid, and with great regret the poor woman acquiesced in the necessity of looking out for another place.

Now old Sarah's turn was come; and this Louisa felt to be the severest trial her poverty could entail upon her. From the moment of her mother's death, the faithful nurse had been a second mother to her, and to part with her now, would fill the measure of her desolation.

"Come in, Sarah," she said, when the latter knocked at the door, in obedience to her summons. "I want to speak to you, and so come and sit down here. You must prepare to hear me patiently," she continued, seeking time herself to gain more courage to speak the necessary words; "what I am going to tell you, cannot be helped. My poor Sarah, you must leave me."

"Leave you? why, Miss Louisa, what can you mean? Do you think, because I have always staid at home when you went about to different places, that I can't live anywhere but at Oaklands? Certainly this is the best place of all, and, indeed, I had rather hoped," she continued, with an inquiring glance at Louisa, "that you might not be so sure to leave it altogether, neither. But certainly, if you go, I shan't stay behind; what should I do here, when you are gone?"

"It is not that, my dear Sarah; it is, that I must learn to do without you."

"Ah, but that you can never do," answered the

old woman, with a smile, when she had recovered her first amazement at Louisa's words.

"Only listen to me," said Louisa; "this place, you know, is not mine; it belongs to Mr. St. John, and—"

"Yes, and a great shame it is, for a stranger to step in between father and daughter," interrupted the old nurse in an indignant tone.

"But that is not the worst," said Louisa, and she proceeded to explain by what means she was reduced almost to beggary. As the old woman's mind gradually opened to the comprehension of this fact, her grief became excessive, and she loudly bewailed the fate of her dear child, who, used to every luxury, never could learn to live without them.

"Do not distress yourself about that;" said Louisa, more moved by her sorrow, than by her own misfortune. "I shall soon learn to do without all these things; that is easy enough; it is much harder to part with you, but now you must see the necessity of it. I have already told Elizabeth she must go, and you—"

"But I shall do no such thing," said the old woman almost angrily; "do you think to put *me* on a line with Elizabeth, who has only been here five or six years, and I that nursed you from the cradle! oh, Miss Louisa, I did not expect the like from you!"

"Indeed, I did not mean to hurt your feelings," said Louisa, in a soothing tone, repressing with difficulty her own emotion, "but I cannot help myself."

"Ay, but I can," said the old woman, brightening up through her tears. "As for my going to

service again, I am too old for that, and you do not think I have been such a fool as not to lay up money for my old age, and now I've a right to spend it where I please, I suppose, and I please to live with you."

"My dear Sarah, remember—"

"No, I will not remember anything, except that, all my own children are gone before me, and your dear mamma, that was the same to me as my own, is gone too, and now I am a poor lone old woman, with no one to care for, and no one I can be useful to, but you; and you *cannot* send me away, you who have been my own child all these years!"

Louisa was choking, and could not answer for a few minutes; then she remonstrated again.

"I do not know even what will become of me—"

"It does not signify—it's all the same to me," answered the nurse, in a resolute tone. "If you are visiting, then you know I can dress you, and work for you, very well—though, may be, Elizabeth would think she could do it better; or, if you do live alone, how would you do without any one to take care of you?"

"My dear, kind old nurse," exclaimed Louisa; but both objection and thanks died away upon her lips, and she was unable to express the feelings which filled her heart; feelings which none but those who have known what it is to find one sweet drop mingled in the cup of bitterness can fully appreciate.

When she could speak, she acquiesced thankfully in Sarah's wishes, saying, "I shall soon know more surely what I have to depend upon, and my

money matters may turn out better than I expect; then—”

“I shall be very glad for you,” said the old nurse, “for it is shocking to think of your being poor, but it will make no difference to me; from this moment I will never receive another farthing. Did not your poor dear papa pay me handsomely, all these years, that I have been of next to no use at all? No, no, I’ve got my money safe in the savings’ bank, and the only difference will be, that instead of taking a lonesome cottage to live and pine by myself, I shall live with you, Miss Louisa, and see your dear face every day. Indeed, if I could not do that, I might just as well live in a dark place, where the sunshine never came, it would just be the same to me.”

Louisa was quite overcome by the old nurse’s tenderness, and, embracing her affectionately, let her settle it all her own way. To her, her poverty had once more become a matter of comparative indifference, since it no longer necessitated this last sad separation; and when she thought that, whilst she had deemed the world a desolate wilderness, there was one faithful heart that still clung to her, and to which she might safely trust, a new tide of gentle and tender feeling overflowed her soul; far different from the tearless anguish she had lately felt. The impossibility of weeping, which had oppressed her almost to suffocation, was now over; her tears flowed copiously, and the sternness of hopeless misery passed away, whilst her heart opened anew to the blessed influence of sympathy and affection, and owned, once more, a resting-place for its lonely weariness.

Her next painful duty was to declare her cir-

cumstances to Dr. L., in order to tell him what she had often attempted in vain to do, how deeply she regretted that he should have wasted so much of his precious time upon one, who was now quite unable to repay him. But Dr. L. silenced her at once; he had known the truth from his first arrival at Oaklands, and had attended her from sincere feeling for her misfortunes, added to the regard which, for years, he had entertained for her father; and he exacted from her, for all payment, a promise, that she would never let any foolish scruple prevent her calling him in on any future occasion, adding, that he should feel seriously hurt, if he ever heard of any other person having attended her.

Louisa expressed her warm thanks for all his kindness, and then announced her intention of starting for town the following day; and, after much persuasion, she acceded to Dr. L.'s request, that she would accept a seat in his carriage. It would be a burden off his conscience, he said, if he could himself see her safely deposited at her aunt's house, thus lightening her sense of obligation by making it a favour to himself; the business was soon arranged, and Louisa promised to be ready to accompany him, with Sarah, whom he also insisted upon taking charge of.

And now the hour for departure drew near. The sun rose in cloudless glory to light that melancholy day, and gild with fresh splendour every feature of the beautiful landscape Louisa had loved from childhood to look upon. Never had it looked so beautiful before, but mournful was that beauty; mournful as the smile which settles on young lips, when the cold seal of death has been gently laid

upon them; mournful as the visions of the exile's "own bright land," when in sorrow and sadness it comes o'er his soul; mournful as the last song from lips we love, or as the echo of some native strain, heard in a foreign land.

Oh, it is a pang, which few on earth excel in bitterness, this bidding farewell to the home of our childhood, the scene of our joyous games, of our first joys and sorrows; the scenes which have formed, as it were, a part of our existence, while existence was yet a cloudless joy; this tearing asunder of all the early ties which bind the heart, even to the inanimate objects, which have been familiar through long, happy years.

During the inevitable business, and the active exertion which accompanies a removal, we think of the journey before us, of the place we are going to, of the things to which we are forced to give a certain degree of care. Our own comfort in the arrangements we have to make necessarily engages our attention; but when all is over, and we look round to see that nothing is forgotten, and sit down in inaction till the moment of departure arrives, then the thought first flashes in all its force upon the mind, that this look *really is the last*. We feel that, in the few sad moments that remain, we cannot drink in a sufficiently strong impression of that which we would have live for ever in our hearts; we cannot gaze sufficiently on all that we have loved so long. And thus poor Louisa wandered from room to room, from tree to tree; from her mother's flower-garden to her father's favourite seat, overlooking the wide expanse of ocean, and the long line of rugged coast,

the feeling all the while tightening at her heart that she might never look upon them again.

She felt that her strength was unequal to bear her to the village, to visit her father's grave, as she wished to do, and she made a vain attempt even to reach the craig which had been hers and Reginald's favourite resort in by-gone days; but, far as her weakness would allow, did she wander till memory retraced every scene which had marked those various spots; and words, and trifles, forgotten before, rose up fresh and distinct, as in the moment of their occurrence. Her father, Reginald, Arthur, seemed to meet her at every turn; and now, whilst she paced, feeble and solitary, to take a last farewell of their favourite haunts, where were they all? The one in the peaceful tomb, forgetful of all earthly things, unmindful even of his child's affliction; another wandering far from his native land, and as ignorant as the dead of the sufferings of his early friend; the other—oh! where was he? His last dreadful words rang in her ears, and she feared to ask where he might be. A sudden blight seemed to have come over all nature's loveliness; she turned away affrighted, and as she hastened to take refuge in the house, she felt like one labouring under a curse.

It required an interval of repose, and no small exertion, to subdue the emotion which awhile overpowered her, and to prepare herself to meet Dr. L., and to accompany him with some degree of calmness. She was anxious to get away early, that she might avoid open demonstrations of regret from any of the poor people in the village, whom she felt no fortitude to meet at this moment; she

would have liked to glide out unperceived by any one, but this wish was doomed to be frustrated.

No sooner was it known that the post-horses, which were seen to pass through the village, were for Dr. L., and that he was to take away Miss Conway with him, than the whole population was in a state of ferment, and a number of persons were soon collected round the steps of the door, and even in the hall, to see her once more, and speak some last words to her before she left the house. Those amongst whom she and her mother had moved as messengers of comfort and consolation, wished to have a parting word from her lips, and to invoke a parting blessing on her head; and many who owed all their well-being to her father, came to condole with his child, on their common loss, and to express their sorrow that the last descendant of those who, from father to son, had lived amongst them, and shed blessings around, was forced to leave her ancestral home.

Louisa heard that they were thus waiting to see her, and she lingered some time longer in the library before she had courage to encounter the crowd of long familiar faces on which the sorrow of a last farewell was painted in modes as diverse as the number of minds in which it was felt. When, at length, she opened the door, the first person she saw was Edward Annesley, who was at that moment hastily entering the hall; and, unwilling to meet him where so many eyes would be upon them, she instantly withdrew, and sent a servant to say she should be glad to see Mr. Annesley in the library. In a few minutes he entered, looking pale and haggard, but with his usual kind expression and warm manner.

"My dear Miss Conway, I had no idea that you were to leave us so soon."

"I only decided to do so yesterday, as Dr. L. is kind enough to take me to town," replied Louisa; "and I would not let you know, for I thought...."

He saw her hesitate to conclude the sentence, and said—

"You thought I could be little fit to see any one at present. But I could not let you depart without a few words of farewell, if you were kind enough to admit me; and now I rejoice that I made the attempt."

"I am glad also to have the opportunity of thanking you for all your kindness and attention to me and to my poor father. Kindness shown at such times as these can never be forgotten," said Louisa, in a trembling voice.

"I entreat you," exclaimed Annesley, "not to mention it; I have had it little in my power to show gratitude for the kindness of years; and as for yourself, my dear Miss Conway....."

The recollection of the tie of almost brotherly regard which had bound him to Ellen's only friend, was too overpowering to allow him to continue, and there was a silence of several minutes, during which Louisa was scarcely less overcome.

"Will you give my best love to Mrs. Allen?" she said at length, struggling with her emotion, and anxious to break the silence; "she knows that I have really been too ill to see her, and I should not have strength even now to reach the parsonage. I will write to her from London when I have collected my ideas a little: at present, I do not know what I am going to do, and I am not very well able to think," she added, with a sigh.

"Who are you going to in London?" asked Edward, anxiously.

"To Lady Frances Montague, for the present. Other friends have been kind enough to ask me, and amongst them, Lady Ethelwode; but that is the last house I could go to just now."

Edward looked his thanks for these words, in which he read her sympathy in his suffering. After a short silence, during which he was evidently seeking to gain courage to speak on some trying subject, he said, in a low voice—

"When you write, will you occasionally mention what you know of *her*. I would fain hear that she is happy, though she has taken all charge of her happiness out of my hands. And should you see her—should she seem to think that—that there is bitterness in my thoughts of her—tell her that I pray for her—as fervently—as anxiously now, as when her happiness was to have been mine also."

Louisa could not answer, but she held out her hand, which he seized, and pressed in silence.

"And now," she said, in a faltering voice, after some moments' pause, "I think I must delay no longer. Dr. L. has been very kind in waiting for me so long. I think I hear his voice in the hall."

It was he, accordingly, and he appeared at the library door to say that he was ready whenever Miss Conway wished to go.

"I may as well make the effort at once," said Louisa, hardly conscious that she was speaking aloud; "no delay can make it less painful." She leant back for a moment in her chair, covering her face with her hands; then, slowly surveying once more each well-known object in the room, she accepted Annesley's arm, and passed into the hall.

Here the sight of her hardly-suppressed grief, her deep mourning, and dejected countenance, so different from her usual calm but cheerful deportment, struck a kind of awe into the hearts of those who were waiting to see her, and the noisy greetings died away upon their lips. A few of the most privileged alone pressed forward, and shook her extended hand as they murmured a blessing over it. She bore the trial with forced calmness, but she could not speak; and when she entered the carriage, after taking a silent leave of Annesley, she sank back on the seat as one stunned, and did not even perceive that she was alone; Dr. L., with the real tact of good feeling, having declared that he was anxious to take advantage of the beauty of the morning by going outside for the first few stages.

The carriage rolled rapidly on, and the heavy clang of the old gates, as they closed behind it, sounded to the desolate orphan as the last knell of departed happiness.

CHAPTER V.

"But there are trials for the noble heart,
Wherein its own deep fountains must supply
All it can hope of comfort."

MRS. HEMANS.

"The hearth, the hearth is desolate; the fire is quench'd and gone,
That unto children's happy eyes once brightly laugh'd and shone;
The place where mirth and music met, is hush'd through day and
night,
Oh, for one kind, one sunny face of all that then made light!"

MRS. NORTON.

"I wonder they are not here yet," exclaimed Minna Montague, as she and her mother and sister sat late in the evening of that day, expecting the arrival of the travellers.

"I hope nothing has happened to them," said Lady Frances, fretfully; "my nerves have been so shattered of late, that I really am quite unequal to bearing any fresh shock."

"It would certainly be very unfeeling in Louisa to incur any more misfortunes just on purpose to annoy you," said Minna, imitating her mother's tone so naturally, that, as usual, the sarcasm was unfelt, and Lady Frances went on.

"I always hated that journey to and from Oaklands; it is the longest and the most tedious in the world, I do believe. If I were Louisa, I am sure, the thoughts that I should never have to go

through it again, would go a great way to reconcile me to the change of circumstances."

"That would be a consideration, certainly," said Minna, ironically; "but I wish she would come; I detest waiting in this way."

"It is really dreadfully trying. It was very inconsiderate of Louisa, I must say, not to tell us exactly at what hour she would be here. Hush! there is a carriage now, I think."

"No, it is next door, at the Pardoes," said Fanny.

"That is so provoking, too," exclaimed Minna, whose temper seemed somewhat ruffled; "it was so tiresome of Louisa just to have fixed upon to-day for her arrival, and so have made us lose Mrs. Pardoe's assembly, which is always one of the best in the season; and I told Sir Edward Willoughby I should certainly be there."

"It is a pity to have missed it," said Fanny, "but it could not be helped."

"I should have helped it, though; if you had not come in and supported mamma with your sentiments and speeches about Louisa's feelings, &c., as if Louisa could possibly be so silly as to care about it."

"I do not think it would be at all silly of her to care, when she arrives in all her misery, whether there is any body to give her a welcome or not, and I wonder you could think of such a thing, Minna."

"It really would have seemed unfeeling, my dear Minna," said Lady Frances, in a conciliating tone, for she was rather afraid of her eldest daughter; "and one must consider appearances, you know; the world always judges by them."

"I was not thinking of appearances," said Fanny; "I really feel too much for poor Louisa to have insulted her with the sight of ball-dresses, the moment of her arrival, at such a time as this."

"This is all very fine," said Minna, with a sneer; "but I never could be sentimental in my life. I dare say I am just as sorry for my cousin as you are, but, if either she or you expect me to make speeches about it, you will find yourselves very much mistaken."

"Here she is!" exclaimed Fanny, as a carriage was heard to drive up to the door. "Now pray, Minna, do receive her kindly."

An impatient retort was upon Minna's lips, but she had no time to utter it. The door opened, and Louisa entered the room, pale as marble, but calm and collected in manner, as was her wont. Even Minna's heart smote her for a moment, and Lady Frances's premeditated effusion of sentiment died away on her lips, as they beheld that silent "majesty of woe," which was to them incomprehensible, whilst Fanny, who, when out of the world's influence, and her vanity not in play, was really a warm-hearted girl, sprang forward to welcome her cousin with unaffected cordiality.

Louisa had prepared herself to meet coldness and affectation of sentiment from her relations, but not for such a demonstration of honest sympathy, and she was nearly overcome; but Fanny led her gently to a seat, and before she was required to speak, she had regained her self-possession.

A few inquiries about her health and her journey were made and answered, and then she gladly accepted her aunt's offer of retiring to her own

room, to seek the rest of which she stood so greatly in need.

"I will show her the way," said Fanny, wishing to spare her cousin a *tête-à-tête* interview with her mother, whom she suspected was not very likely to prove the best of all possible comforters.

Lady Frances assented; for she felt that she could not speak just then quite as well as she should wish. There was something in Louisa's look and manner which made it impossible to give way before her to any display of sentiment, or even to address to her the words of common-place condolence; so her aunt contented herself with kissing her, and wishing her good-night, with a deep sigh.

Louisa was thankful when she found herself alone, in her quiet back room, where Fanny had left her, with affectionate tact, under pretext of going to look for old Sarah. She was worn out in body and mind, and she threw herself upon the sofa, and closed her eyes, as if to shut out all the external objects which had been wearying her sight and spirits for so many hours, and find rest in the blank of darkness. So completely was she buried in her sad thoughts, that Fanny entered the room again unperceived, and at first imagined that she had fallen asleep; but a low moan convinced her of her mistake, and she laid her hand on Louisa's, and gently pronounced her name. Louisa started up, and, as she met her cousin's affectionate glance, she threw her arms round her neck, and burst into a flood of tears.

At first, Fanny was glad that the misery which had seemed to her almost awful from its stern suppression of all outward manifestation, should

find such a natural relief; but she became alarmed, as she saw how that unusual emotion shook Louisa's whole frame, and that for some minutes she was almost convulsed with the sobbing, which seemed as if it must rend her very heartstrings. She tried to soothe her, but she was too little used to the sight of affliction, to have power to make the words of consolation heard through the tempest of the soul, and she could only stand beside her in silence, and weep too: perhaps no consolation could have been more effective. Louisa's tears flowed more gently, as the soothing feeling that there was some one to feel for and with her, came over her heart. Gradually the violence of her sobbing decreased, and she sank back exhausted. As she recovered herself, her first feeling seemed to be confusion at having made so unusual an exhibition before another person.

"I am very weak, as you see, dear Fanny," said she, smiling faintly, "and not fit for any society but my own. If you will send old Sarah to me, she will do every thing I want, and I think I had better get to bed as fast as I can."

Fanny kissed her, and left the room at once. Sarah soon made her appearance, but she saw that her young mistress was too much exhausted to be spoken to; and she silently performed all the little services that she required. When Louisa lay down to rest, she kissed her as she used to do when she was a child, and blessed her with motherly fondness; and Louisa felt that the most eloquent sympathy could not have done so much to soothe her as that simple kiss and blessing.

The next morning she excused herself from appearing at breakfast on account of a bad headache.

Minna felt relieved by her absence, for there is no constraint so irksome as the necessity of showing outward tokens of feeling when the heart is cold and untouched. The flaming account in the *Morning Post* of Mrs. Pardoe's assembly the night before, and the mention of Sir Edward Willoughby's name amongst the distinguished guests, increased Minna's annoyance and impatience at the restraint she feared her cousin's presence would impose upon her. Fortunately there were no invitations for this day, and it passed off quietly enough. Minna was sufficiently dull to wear a very decent appearance of sympathy in Louisa's dejection, and the latter was too much occupied with her own thoughts to scan very accurately her cousin's real feelings.

The next day, however, the Montagues were engaged to a breakfast, the last of the season, at Lady Leicester's; and Minna eagerly urged the necessity of keeping the engagement.

"If we refuse two such parties," said she, "it really will be giving out that we do not mean to go out any more this year; and I, for one, am not at all inclined to shut myself up in this way."

"Certainly not, my dear," said her mother; "and if you were, I should not allow it; I must think of you, as well as your cousin. Perhaps to-day is rather soon, though; I am not sure what people will think of it."

Minna, however, had made up her mind to go; and she quickly overruled all her mother's scruples. Louisa could not be hurt, she said, by their going out now, a whole month after her father's death; or, if she were, it would be very absurd and selfish of her. Fanny was not quite so easily convinced, and she resolved, not without a slight struggle, that she

would remain at home and keep her cousin company.

The matter being thus settled, Lady Frances and Minna went to dress for their breakfast; and Fanny sat down to her work with a feeling of satisfaction which astonished herself, when she reflected on the unusual sacrifice she had made. It was not till her mother and sister came to take leave of Louisa, that the latter discovered Fanny's act of self-denial; but it was in vain that she remonstrated, and assured her cousin that she did not at all mind being left alone.

"Indeed, I shall be happier with you," repeated Fanny; "I could not bear to leave you, unwell as you are; and I should not have enjoyed myself at all."

Louisa saw that her cousin was sincere, and she desisted from urging her any further. From this time she began to grow fond of Fanny, whose naturally good disposition had, whenever they met before, been obscured by the little interests of vanity and an affected manner, the natural result of her education. Louisa's kindness to her when she was ill at Oaklands had first touched her heart; and now the sight of her cousin's sorrow brought out all her better feelings. Day by day her close companionship with her cousin seemed to improve her character. It was the first *reality*, if we may so express it, that she had ever seen. Brought up as she had been for the world, she well knew that all things were hollow there, and she had concluded that every thing in life was hollow and unsound likewise. Her first perception of moral beauty awoke now as Louisa's mind unfolded itself to her, in its strength and in its sufferings, its faith and its

obedience. To the poor world-loving girl, it was like lifting up a veil, and disclosing to her glimpses of another sphere, a world peopled with different beings, bowing before some high and mysterious shrine, whose beauty slowly and at times only revealed itself to her astonished mind. Thus unconsciously was Louisa, in the midst of sorrow, and poverty, and dependance, working for good by the mere influence of character; and thus must all work, however low their circumstances, however narrow their sphere, who walk steadily by faith, and not by sight, leaving the consequences to Providence.

Minna was right in supposing that her cousin would not care if she went out or not. Louisa did not expect feeling from her relations, and was neither surprised nor hurt at their showing none, although she could not suppress her disgust at the attempt to convert their mourning into a becoming attire for the gay parties to which, although the long season was fast drawing to a close, they were still frequently engaged. She had other and far more painful subjects to engross her thoughts now.

Mr. Eagle had written to her, to inform her that he had entered into communication with Mr. St. John's agent on the subject of the valuation of the furniture and other moveable property at Oaklands, but that Mr. St. John had refused to allow any valuation to be made. He intended the house to be dismantled, and he had given orders that every thing should be sold by auction. The old family pictures and the valuable library were to go with the rest, as Mr. St. John did not mean to inhabit the place, and wished to avoid the expense of keeping it up in its present state.

It was a heavy blow to Louisa, to hear that her

old and beloved home was to be thus despoiled and left desolate; that the familiar objects associated in her mind with all the happy recollections of her life, even the pictures of her forefathers, were to be taken from the places they had occupied for so many generations, and be sold into the hands of strangers; but far more bitter was it to see, in this order of St. John's, the accomplishment of his last passionate threat, to feel that it was to effect the revenge he had sworn against her that he despoiled her home, and left it to fall to ruin. In her weaker moments the thought would recur that she might have averted all this, that she might now have been the mistress of that beloved home; that, had she not cast him from her, her love might have redeemed him from his errors, and saved him from the desperate courses into which he had now thrown himself; and it was not always that she could find consolation in the reflection that she had acted up to the duty which at the time had seemed plain and undoubted to her, and that the consequences were in higher hands than hers.

One of the minor annoyances of this transaction was, that Louisa became thereby less certain of adequate payment for the sale of what was now her only property, and that there must necessarily be greater delay in the arrangement of her affairs, during which she must remain in the state of complete dependance she found it so difficult to endure. Her proud spirit, as yet unsubdued by sorrow and suffering, rebelled against this necessity, but there was no alternative but to submit. There was no one but the Montagues to whom she could turn. All her other relatives were total strangers. Reginald was far away; and if he had been in England, what could

he have done for her? Ellen!—but with the thought of her came sorrow and anxiety greater than any she felt for herself.

She had not heard again from her; and all she knew of her movements was gathered from the papers, which occasionally mentioned the arrival or departure of Lord and Lady Caldwell at different places abroad, and from the *on-dits* of London gossip, of which Minna and her mother were the most indefatigable collectors and retailers. What she heard was little calculated to relieve her anxiety; and Ellen's long silence tended to confirm her worst fears. She must be changed and miserable indeed if she could find no relief, no pleasure in writing to her—if she had no sympathy to give her early and faithful friend in her poverty and desolation; and Louisa often forgot, in pondering mournfully over her fate, all anxiety about her own.

CHAPTER VI.

"Love is dead to me,
And Hope hath left my breast,
And Memory, like a bird,
Wails o'er her ruined nest.

"I live on in my youth,
Although that youth to me
Is blighted, sere, and reft,
As autumn leaf could be."

If beauty, rank, wealth, and fashion, can constitute happiness, then was Lady Caldwell undoubtedly a happy woman, for she possessed all these in a pre-eminent degree. Her husband's political celebrity gave her beauty a European reputation. In the months succeeding her marriage, she visited most of the great capitals in Europe; and at Brussels, Vienna, Rome, Naples, Paris, she was equally the admired of all admirers, the envied of all enviers. Whithersoever she went, she was "followed, flattered, sought, and sued;" the highest and most exclusive circles were thrown open at her approach, and she was ever hailed as their brightest ornament. So far Lord Caldwell's original motive for marrying her was fully answered. His wife was, indisputably, as perfect, in her way, as his horses, his equipages, his cook, and his furniture; every one allowed that it was impossible to have "an establishment *mieux monté*," from the diminutive tiger who stood behind his lordship's cab, to the

exquisitely lovely woman who presided at his table; and Lord Caldwell was as much the envy of the one sex, as Lady Caldwell of the other.

Who could suspect that beneath the brilliant surface of such an existence lay hidden the bitter ashes of the fabled fruit of Sodom? Who could dream, that the bland tones, and courteous demeanour of the husband, concealed hatred, and scorn, and tyranny—that the radiant smiles, the musical laugh, of the wife, were but a mask for the seared and bitter heart, without hope, or love, or faith, in aught human or divine? None; for both husband and wife well knew, that to have allowed any prying eye to discover the dark hollows which lay beneath that glittering exterior, would have been to break at once the spell of their popularity. Both were aware that, in the society in which they moved as luminaries, it would have been a violation of its supreme law of good taste, an unpardonable outrage on the peace of mind of all its members, to startle it with such a revelation of the realities of life.

And, truly, it is natural that it should be so. In the eyes of those who spend their whole earthly existence in strenuous endeavours to weave a bright artificial web, that may conceal from them all the vulgar and displeasing truths of life, the degrading universality of human nature, its common wants, and sorrows, and sufferings,—no crime could be so unpardonable, as rending asunder the glittering veil, and obstructing the hideous aspect of misery, even in their very sanctuary. Lord and Lady Caldwell knew that, in the creed of this sect, the common feelings of our nature were only so far recognised that men and women might eat and

drink "*faire de l'amour, ou ce qui lui ressemble le plus*;" but that passion, whether good or evil, sorrow, suffering, the holy ties which bind man to man, and the creature to his Creator, had no acknowledged existence there.

In that creed, man might be a gregarious animal in his pleasures; but, in his woe, he must withdraw from the herd, and, like the stricken beast of the field, hide himself in the deepest thicket, lest the sight of his suffering and his mortality should cast a cloud over the brilliant fabric of his brethren's existence, and startle them from their pleasant dream. Knowing this, Lord and Lady Caldwell acted their parts with a perfection that might have deceived eyes more interested in discovering the truth than the gay associates who feasted on his lordship's dinners, and sunned themselves in the light of her ladyship's dazzling beauty, and pronounced them the most charming, the most enviable people on the face of the earth.

It was only three weeks after their marriage, that the news of Sir Charles Conway's death, and the poverty to which Louisa was reduced, reached them at Brussels. Hardened as Ellen's heart was, she felt the death of Sir Charles Conway as the loss of one to whom she could, at all times, have turned as to a friend and protector; and the thought of Louisa's loneliness and destitution moved her more deeply than she had believed any thing could move her now. Under the salutary influence of these feelings, she sat down and wrote to Louisa, the first long letter she had ventured to write since her marriage, full of affection and sympathy, entreating her to come to her, and consider,

henceforth, the house of her earliest friend, her almost sister, as her future home.

Before she sent her letter, however, she remembered that it was necessary to acquaint her husband with the invitation she had given; for, although the honeymoon was not yet over, and nothing had occurred to reveal Lord Caldwell's real sentiments towards her, she had already learned to know that, by the husband, her wishes were not always quite so much considered laws as they had been by the lover. She proceeded, therefore, to seek Lord Caldwell, to inform him of her intentions with respect to her friend.

"I have written to Louisa Conway, to ask her to make her home with us for the present," she said, carelessly, as she entered his room. "I suppose you have no objection?"

"The very greatest objection!" exclaimed her husband, throwing aside the book he was reading. "What could possess you to do such a thing, my dear" (Lord Caldwell always said "my love," or "my dear," when he was angry), "without consulting me? I hope you have not sent the letter?"

"No, not yet; but I must send it some time to-day, as there is no post for England again till Thursday."

"I beg you will not send it all," resumed Lord Caldwell; "I would not have such an invitation given on any account."

"Surely, Lord Caldwell, you cannot be serious! What possible objection can you have to Louisa Conway, a person whom you yourself always professed to like and admire, and who is my oldest and best friend?"

“That is the very reason why I do not choose to have her an inmate in my house. I detest female friends; they make all sorts of mischief in families; they are sure to be the depositories of all the wife’s grievances, to take her part on all occasions, and to misrepresent every action of the husband’s, both to her and to the world.”

“If I had wished to ask Mademoiselle Juliani here, you might have dreaded some such result,” said Ellen, scornfully; “but you must be as well aware as I am, that Louisa Conway is immeasurably above such practices, and that her presence in our house would only secure us a most agreeable and valuable companion.”

“My dear, *I* wish for no other companion but you, and I hope you do not feel the want of any besides your husband. Third persons are always in the way, you know. Besides, Miss Conway would not, I suppose, live with us on the footing of your *dame de compagnie*, even if I were inclined to make such a useless and expensive addition to our establishment; and she could not afford, in her present circumstances, to mingle in any other character in the society we keep.”

“As a *dame de compagnie*!” exclaimed Ellen, in indignant astonishment. “Louisa Conway, who has been to me as a sister, to live with me in a dependant situation!—no, assuredly! If she comes, my home shall be her home; and if she is poor, my purse shall be her purse.”

“You forget an important circumstance in this arrangement,” said her husband, coldly; “which is, that your home is in *my* house; and your purse, as I do not recollect your bringing any fortune to

me, to be simply another word for mine ; and I confess I find drains enough upon it already, without voluntarily adding another to the number. I cannot afford to have your penniless friends living upon me."

Ellen turned away with a burning heart. She daily saw Lord Caldwell lavish immense sums for purposes of ostentation and unnecessary display ; and yet he refused to give a shelter under his gorgeous roof, a place at his luxurious table, to his wife's dearest friend, on the score of expense. Her whole being revolted against the cold sordidness which he thus exhibited, and she was stung to the quick by the covert insult to herself.

"I am to tell Louisa, then," said she, in a voice trembling with passion, "that you have refused the first request I have ever made to you ; that you consider the poor pittance of her board and lodging too heavy a burden on an income of sixty thousand a year, to allow you to offer a home to your wife's dearest friend?"

"You must settle that matter as you please," said her husband, quietly. "You are angry now ; but when you are cooler, you will see things in a different light ; and I suppose, for your own sake, you will not like to make such a confession of your want of influence over me. Miss Conway might report it to Mr. Annesley, and that would be giving him too great a triumph."

Lady Caldwell hastily left the room, and hurried to her own. What was it to her at that moment, that the couch on which she threw herself might have vied in luxurious ease with the Sybarite's bed of roses ? What to her was the almost eastern

magnificence of the apartment? What to her that wealth had assembled there forms of classic beauty, and flowers from the gorgeous southern climes, and had even bowed the atmosphere to its power, making it mimic the sweet breath of spring. Unheeded were they all; for in such moments the soul asserts its supremacy over the body, and the objects of sense are forgotten, unfelt, whether they be pleasing or painful in the engrossing action of the spirit.

The last illusion had been rent away from Ellen. She had believed till now that her husband really loved her—that there was in his heart a refuge, a home for her. Had she not told him that she was a withered, blighted thing? and had he not opened his arms to the broken spirit, and assured her that there was healing and new life in his fostering love? And now she knew, she felt that she had never been loved. No, *none* had ever loved her—and oh! who shall tell the unutterable bitterness of that thought to a woman? Her existence was chained by indissoluble ties, more fearful because more holy than all others, to one who not only loved her not, but despised her; and worse than all was the reflection which would not be driven away, that she had herself forged her chains—that this was but the rightful punishment of her perjury at God's altar.

It was not in such a mood as this that she could write over again her letter to Louisa, with the same full and affectionate sympathy as before. Louisa's lot at that moment appeared too enviable to her. If she were poor, friendless, homeless, she had at least peace within, and the certainty that *all* she

had loved and trusted was not a grinning mockery. Ellen, therefore, contented herself with writing a letter of common-place condolence on Sir Charles's death, carefully avoiding all mention of herself or her change of existence.

From henceforth, the appearance of harmony which had existed between Lord and Lady Caldwell was at an end—not in the eyes of the world, but in their private life. He had thrown off the mask of affection, and could not have resumed it, even if he had wished to do so. The power was now in his hands, and he had no longer need of the aid of hypocrisy. But he soon found that he had himself deprived that power of its worst sting. He had seared every green and living affection in Ellen's heart, and now it was hardened and hardening more and more. She met unmoved the covert sneer, the perpetual contradiction, all the machinery of petty torment which he directed against her; or flung them back to him in passionate defiance, with all the greater force that her passions when roused were hotter and fiercer than any his cold nature was capable of.

She threw herself eagerly into the world; and in the admiration and joy with which it always welcomed her, she strove to find, not consolation—there was none for her on earth—but forgetfulness of her inward desolation.

The fire of affliction was not to her a purifying, softening influence, cleansing and regenerating the spirit. It was the furnace hardening the potter's clay. None who had known Ellen Percival in other days would have recognised the warm-hearted, natural, simple-minded girl, in the cold, hard, po-

lished, and sarcastic woman of fashion, whose reputation for beauty and flightiness made her a mark for the best of her own sex to shrink from, and the worst of the other to gather round as a legitimate prey.

CHAPTER VII.

"A soul, loathing, what true souls ever loathe, Dependence, help from the unworthy to help."

CARLYLE.

"For suffering and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing."

Louisa's health slowly recovered from the shock it had sustained during the last few months; and, as her physical strength returned, she resumed also her power over herself, and turned, with her wonted energy, to seek, in activity and settled purpose of pursuit, forgetfulness—or, at least, a balm, the only sure one for her mental suffering. But the continued uncertainty of her affairs was a sore hindrance to her endeavours; and there was another obstacle in her way which, to her, was the most trying of all, in the perpetual irritation caused by the manner and conversation of her aunt and Minna.

Impossible as it was that minds so differently constituted should understand each other, the utmost that could be expected was, that since Nature had, in some degree, bound them together, they should live in peace; but this also seemed impossible. The envy ever rankling in Minna's mind, and which could not rest even now at the sight of Louisa's

misfortunes, whilst she saw also how nobly those misfortunes were borne, infused a venom into each word which, from other lips, might have fallen harmless. "*C'est le ton qui fait la Musique*" is an old and homely saying, but most true withal; and we, perhaps, hate the offence the more that it is intangible. Words can be met and answered; but the tone of the voice, the slight emphasis on some expression, thereby made offensive; the secret bitterness which lurks in an almost imperceptible sneer, cannot be defined or seized—we *feel* them only, and either mourn over or resent them.

Louisa's great fault, as we have seen throughout, was pride; and a certain sternness and irritability of temper always called forth when forced to witness the follies, the little meannesses of minds, above which her own education had raised her; and, in her present position, she was daily and hourly exposed to this trial. Here *Petitesse* reigned throughout. Mother and daughters were given up to the cultivation of the *little*; little motives, little views, little regrets, little occupations, little fears, little envyings and bickerings: no straggling ray of light seemed ever to have shown forth to them, however dimly, that there was a higher and wider range beyond their narrow circle.

Fanny alone, as we have said, began the process of moral enlargement, by learning to admire and reverence a lofty character, and thus there were hopes for her; but this very circumstance only increased Minna's want of cordiality, when she saw that her sister, inferior to herself in cleverness and in all worldly means of pleasing, was gradually making her way with Louisa, and, by the simple power of feeling, attaining a higher place than she

could pretend to in the esteem of one whose esteem she could not, in her secret heart, help acknowledging was worth obtaining. It may be generally remarked that we never feel so uncharitable as when we are practically shown, by a person we usually condemn, the error or the folly of our conduct.

Nothing of what had passed between Louisa and St. John, at Oaklands, had reached the ears of the Montagues; for, besides Louisa's natural reserve in all things, it would have been impossible for her to have spoken upon this subject; and, therefore, Lady Frances, who had eagerly gathered all the accounts of St. John's despair on Louisa's first rejection of his proposals, never gave up the hope that he might propose again.

"He must think it was her poor father's fault that she refused him;" so her ladyship would say; "and now that he is gone, she may act as she pleases; and, in her present circumstances, I should think she would not hesitate."

"No," replied Minna; "if Mr. St. John is fool enough to come wooing again, I suspect we shall see her very glad to have him at last."

"But how is she to meet him?" said Lady Frances; "those things always require a little management to bring about; and she really shuts herself up so absurdly, that he has no chance of seeing her, even in the park. I must think about it; I dare say I can manage something for her, poor thing! she has no one to think for her now but myself." And, feeling all the responsibility thus laid upon her, Lady Frances was soon lost in cogitations and plans, possible and impossible, for bringing Louisa and St. John together again in the most natural

manner in the world; and it was with great difficulty that she refrained from talking to Louisa herself about it during the evening which they spent alone together, the two girls having gone to a ball with Mrs. Carew.

But the next morning she was doomed to be sorely disappointed. When Minna came down to breakfast she was evidently full of news; something was on her lips which she longed to tell, but Louisa's presence restrained her; and she sat in evident impatience, scarcely answering her mother's inquiries about the ball, only eager to have the breakfast over; at length, the wished-for moment came, Louisa left the room; and, no sooner was the door closed, than she burst forth with the story of St. John's second proposal and rejection, which she had heard the night before from Mrs. Carew. Lady Frances was, at first, incredulous, then indignant.

"Impossible!" she exclaimed; "what madness! how ungrateful of her, after all the trouble I had taken to arrange the matter for her! I really gave myself quite a nervous headache last night thinking of her; and now she has destroyed all our hopes by her folly; it is too bad!"

"It is preposterous, certainly," answered Minna; "and now what is to become of her? that, I suppose, is what she calls proper pride and independence of character, to prefer living on her relations to marrying a man she had once refused."

"But are you sure it is true?" asked Lady Frances; "when did Mrs. Carew hear it? I cannot believe it."

"The story comes from Mr. St. John himself, who would not be anxious to circulate such a

report if it were not most true. Mrs. Carew had written to him several times, wondering why he did not come to town, and two or three days ago he, at length, answered her inquiries, by telling her what had passed at Oaklands, and raving, she says, like a madman about it; declaring, amongst other wild things, that he would never live at Oaklands, and that he had ordered the house to be dismantled accordingly, which she is very angry about, as she intended to have paid him a visit there next autumn."

"Well, I am sure, my dear girls, this will be a good lesson to you," said Lady Frances; "it would break my heart to see either of you act in such a manner. She can never be any thing now but a poor crabbed old maid, for who will marry her, without either money or beauty? I hope you will always remember that women are very wrong who do not marry when they can; it really distresses me to hear all those romantic notions; I know *I* always thought any husband better than to remain unmarried, but some young ladies will be *so* wise. Oh, dear! that my poor sister's child should be so unlike other people! how it would have grieved her poor mother!"

If Lady Frances could have been persuaded to reserve her lamentations for her daughters, it would have been well, but the affair seemed so monstrous to her that she resolved to question Louisa about it. In vain did Fanny try to divert her from this intention, by entreating her mother to spare Louisa's feelings.

"You do not know," urged the kind-hearted girl, "how much she suffers. I often see, when I go into her room, that it is not without difficulty

that she attains the composure she usually wears when with others; and I am sure any question upon this subject would distress her dreadfully."

"My dear Fanny," replied her mother, in a tone of grave surprise and displeasure, "I hope you do not think *me* unfeeling; it is strange that you should consider yourself a better judge of what is right than I am. I shall certainly feel it my duty to speak to Louisa upon this subject, though, Heaven knows, how trying it will be to *my* feelings!"

In pursuance of this strict line of duty, Lady Frances took the first opportunity of questioning Louisa as to the truth of Mrs. Carew's statement, and of giving her a solemn lecture upon her extraordinary conduct when she heard her own lips confirm its truth. Poor Louisa bore this with all the calmness she could assume, and actually refrained from giving utterance to any of the bitter or indignant feelings which such an harangue called forth. But, though she could heroically endure this open attack, she was not equally proof against the daily insinuations, the half sneers, the wise speeches, the ominous prophecies, the awful denunciations, against the sins of pride and love of singularity with which she was henceforth continually assailed by Lady Frances and Minna; and, forgetting how prone they had been to this species of warfare in former days, when all they could say or do was a matter of comparative indifference to her, she laid all their unkindness to the score of her now dependant situation, and her proud spirit revolted more and more against it.

"Better eat the dry crust and drink the cold draught of poverty, than live in a dependance,

which gives to such minds the right to trample on my best and highest feelings!" she would frequently exclaim, after some scene of frivolous annoyance or petty altercation, in which she had with difficulty kept her temper, because she felt it so immeasurably beneath her to appear hurt, or in which she had perhaps given way to anger, and was afterwards vexed at her want of self-command; and daily now would the thought recur, and assume gradually a more distinct shape as she pondered on her future fate.

Whenever she alluded, before Lady Frances, to any of her plans for self-maintenance, they were always received with horror at the idea of *her* niece doing any thing for herself; and yet it seemed little probable that, with her scanty means, she could otherwise avoid total dependence. Lady Frances would no doubt have been thunderstruck had any one accused her of driving her niece from her house; her wish, on the contrary, was, that she should remain there, or at least divide her time between other friends or relations, thus retaining her last chance of making some suitable marriage; and she hoped that, under her care and tuition, some of her strange singularities might be smoothed down, whilst the disgrace of seeking actual employment for her livelihood would be avoided; for as a disgrace only could Lady Frances look upon such an alternative. Not only was it dreadful, for the poor girl's own sake, to think of her becoming a governess, as Louisa once proposed, but what would become of *her*, if she should ever happen to visit in the house where her poor dear sister's only child was little better than a servant—it was too dreadful to think of!

Yet to this, or to some other plan for her own support, equally distressing to Lady Frances's feelings, did Louisa now begin seriously to turn her thoughts, in case her pittance should turn out too small to enable her to live in independence. Taught by the experience of what she endured in the house of her nearest relatives, she was most averse to trying the same sort of life with more distant friends or connections. With the injustice, so common to those who have found some difference produced by reverse of fortune, she now expected to meet scorn or unkindness wherever she had before found attention, and she proudly resolved to expose herself as little as possible to feel the change.

Amongst the many plans she revolved in her mind, that of seeking a situation as governess or companion seemed the most eligible and the easiest to accomplish. But though Louisa's pride was different from her aunt's, it revolted scarcely less from such a prospect. If the petty annoyances of her present position seemed insufferable, how could she endure to live in total dependance on the caprice of strangers? In vain she repeated to herself, that to give her services in exchange for the money she needed was a fair compromise, and that there was in such an exchange an independence unknown to her present position; still she could not reconcile it to her thoughts.

"No, it were better to live in lonely poverty, than submit to such an existence," she repeated to herself; "and what, after all, do I need?—bread to feed me, and a roof to shelter me and my faithful Sarah, should she still cling to me, with freedom to roam abroad and enjoy the pure air of

Heaven and the blessed sunshine—and is not such an existence, however lowly, better, ten thousand times better, than hanging on the favour of relations, or teaching my mind to bow to the caprices of those who would buy a right to insult me? My wants are small—then am I rich :” and with this philosophical conclusion she turned to the actual privations of the life she contemplated as a welcome relief from the harassing annoyances of the one she was leading.

She was forced, however, to bear with her present condition some time longer—a time of anxious expectation and weary uncertainty. But, at length, she received the intelligence that the sale at Oaklands was completed ; and, when her share was ascertained, low as her expectations had been, the actual truth fell still short of them, and she found that her income would, for the future, amount to a sum considerably less than what she had formerly received for her private allowance.

Had she been less engrossed with other miseries, doubtless she must have felt this blow more keenly than she did ; for, reared in opulence as she had been, the change was one to shake the strongest mind. But the heart that truly mourns is steeled against the accidents of fortune ; they make the path of life smoother or more thorny ; but, if that path *must* be trod in heaviness, it seems a little thing whether it be rugged or soft. Thus, while Lady Frances was loud in her lamentations, and her daughters lavish of their compassion, Louisa herself seemed scarcely to feel the blow, and stood so unmoved among them, that any stranger would have thought she was the indifferent spectator of the misfortunes of her companions.

To her the tidings of the sale being completed brought other thoughts — thoughts, to which the fear of poverty was light and insignificant. Oaklands, despoiled and deserted, was ever before her eyes, and she lived over again every hour of the suffering she had endured there. And her father's vain prayers for her happiness, vain wish that all he had so carefully watched over and improved, might be cared for still, seemed to mingle in her ears with the sound of St. John's parting words, now so bitterly realized. In that thought there was too much anguish to allow her to dwell on lesser things. Nevertheless, whether in joy or sorrow, those lesser things of every day life are not to be pushed aside; they recur again and again, forcibly claiming our attention, intruding their littleness upon us, to rob us even of the majesty of our sorrow, and thus Louisa was soon forced to turn to the contemplation of actual circumstances, and to ponder seriously on the realities of her condition.

"I trust, my dear," said Lady Frances to her, when she had somewhat overcome her first grief about the sale, "that now you know what you are to expect, and see that you can no longer afford to be independent of the world, you will begin to look about and see what can be done. Of course you know, my dear, I wish you to stay with me; but, at the same time, I must not indulge my selfish wishes by allowing you to give up other friends; and you must pay some attention to your poor father's relations. I dare say they will be glad to be useful to you."

"I do not wish to put them to the test," said Louisa; "they are distant connexions, rather than

relations, and I would not for the world seem to court them now."

"It is time you should learn to lay aside that sort of pride, my dear Louisa," said her aunt, in a solemn tone. "I do not mean to be unkind, but you know it ill suits your present circumstances. In a state of dependence, you know, you must learn to be humble, for you cannot expect that many people should love you, and take you as you are, without conciliation and that sort of thing, as I do, who feel for you as my poor dear sister's child, and....."

"I trust that I shall not long be a burden on your forbearance, any more than on the kindness of other friends," replied Louisa; "if my poverty denies me one kind of independence, it can teach me to earn another."

"Now, my dear child, I beg you will not talk to me of earning any thing," exclaimed Lady Frances, in a displeased tone. "Recollect who you are; *my* niece, and allied by blood to the noblest families in England, to talk of earning a livelihood! It is, my dear Louisa, just what I call romantic pride; it may do very well in books, but it cannot be borne in real life. No, no, you must give up all such nonsense, and live on contentedly where you are, and be very glad when people ask you to their houses, as, I dare say, a great many will for my sake, or even for your poor father's. And then, perhaps, you may manage to make a good marriage at last; for many plainer girls than yourself have done so; and you will be off our hands in the only proper way."

Louisa bit her lips to prevent the expression

of the bitter feelings this tirade called forth, and merely said :

"Such a life could never suit me ; my dulness would be a clog on any one's gaiety ; I am not fit for society now."

"Folly, my dear, mere foolish nonsense," replied her aunt ; "if I had thus quarrelled with society, instead of making up to it, as I did, for my poor girl's sake, and I had sat at home to indulge my own feelings, as in the course of my life I naturally should often have wished to do, where should I be now?"

"We do not all feel alike, and, therefore, our conduct must be different," said Louisa, in a constrained voice.

"I do not expect that at your age you should have that control over your feelings, which is only acquired by long exercise," said Lady Frances, with a deep sigh ; "but you must consent to be guided ; and now I wish to tell you of another plan I have thought of for you, and which I intend speaking of to Lord Leyward, and to Lady Catherine St. John, and to other relations on the first opportunity. Indeed, I hinted it to Lady C. last night."

"What plan can you mean?"

"A plan I give myself some credit for thinking of," said Lady Frances, smiling in pleased reflection at her own ingenuity ; "and I am sure all your relations will be glad to concur in it, when I show the example, for the sacrifice must be greater to me than to any of them. You know, my dear Louisa, we are not rich, or, Heaven knows, I would do a great deal more ; but I propose raising a sub-

scription for you in the family, and to add my mite to it, and so—”

“For Heaven’s sake, my dear aunt—”

“Pray do not interrupt me, Louisa. I do not mean merely a sum to be collected at this moment, but a yearly subscription, just to make your income more respectable, till you marry, and to prevent your being obliged to demean yourself in any improper manner, which would disgrace us all.”

“I am sure, aunt Frances, that you mean it kindly,” said Louisa, as quietly as she could, “but nothing on earth could tempt me to consent to such a scheme.”

“Not consent to it! why you ought to be too thankful, when you are left a beggar, that any one should be willing to help you.”

“Is it possible that you have mentioned this to Lady Catherine St. John?” exclaimed Louisa; “is it possible that you can have taken such a step without consulting me?”

“To be sure I did, and poor Lady Catherine had the tears in her eyes when I told her all about you.”

“I must write to her instantly,——and, I beg, my dear aunt, that this may go no further. As for Lord Leyward—”

“Lord Leyward is my brother, and your uncle, and if he is kind enough—”

“A man,” exclaimed Louisa, interrupting her impatiently, “who, on account of different politics, never forgave my mother’s marriage, and scarcely ever stepped under my father’s roof! am I to go a humble petitioner to his bounty! what can you think I am made of?”

“Indeed, it is far beyond me to know,” replied

Lady Frances, in the peculiar cool tone which always gives the finishing stroke to the anger which has been toiling and chafing, only wanting this last rub to cast off its thin crust of patience.

Louisa started up—but, remembering that it was her mother's sister who was before her, she made a strong effort, and, reseating herself, struggled in silence with her indignation; whilst Lady Frances, wholly unmoved, continued in the same cool tone:—

“You really must learn to control yourself, Louisa, or you will disgust all the friends who are now willing to serve you. As for me—thank God, my feelings cannot be changed towards you, by anything of this sort; but, anxious as I am to bear with you, I must tell you the truth; I owe it to my own poor children, and to dear Montague, whom I cannot expect to support my relations. I cannot afford to have the whole charge of you—certainly you could pay for your dress, and you would not now, I suppose, be above shopping and working for yourself—and I imagine you mean to part with Sarah soon, and that would make some difference; it was very well while you were ill, but to keep a maid, in your circumstances, is quite absurd. Still, I could not do it; there are many people who ask me and the girls now, and whose invitations it is convenient to me, in many respects, to accept, who would not like to have another person added to the party, and then it would be a serious expense to me, having you at home; so, you see, you must be reasonable, and not object to what other people are willing to do for you.”

Louisa had remained quite silent, and by this time the victory was hers, and with a countenance

and manner perfectly unruffled, she turned to her aunt.

"Pray listen to what I have to say; I speak neither in haste nor in anger, but I must be allowed to judge for myself. None of the plans you have mentioned can ever accord with my views; the subscription, no human power should force me to receive; and as to living an incumbrance, alternately, in one house or another, where I was formerly received as an equal, my pride, or temper, call it as you will, could not endure the irritation of such a life. I thank you for the kindness you have *wished* to shew me since I came here; perhaps sorrow may have warped my mind, and I am unable to feel all things as I should do. But I know that I have been here too long; no wonder that my joyless looks should be as a nightmare on all your pleasures; it is natural that it should be so, and I will speedily relieve you. I am now relieved from one great evil, uncertainty, which has hitherto forced me to be a burden on yourself and Mr. Montague; but now, knowing what I have to depend upon, it will only require a little energy to decide upon some plan for my future support—and God help me!"

Louisa's manner had overawed Lady Frances, and she had felt obliged to let her continue uninterrupted. But now she poured out a torrent of objections, mingled with reproaches, protestations, dreadful prophecies, every thing which pride—pride of station and fear of the world's censure—could suggest to a weak and vain mind, but without effect. She had said enough to show Louisa in what light she was looked upon by her relations, and her firm resolve was now taken.

"It would have broken your poor mother's heart if she could have seen this day," cried Lady Frances, in her most pathetic voice, and throwing herself back in her arm-chair, "or your poor father's either, for he did take some pains with you, certainly, though I told him, all along, that he was mistaken, and now it is proved."

"I trust my father would have seen nothing to disapprove of in my present resolution," said Louisa, deeply moved at this mention of him; "surely he did not dedicate his time and thoughts to me for so many years, to make me, at length, in the day of adversity, fit only to be a more dependent being than the child of the meanest, most ignorant pauper, who can pull up weeds in a garden, and earn the bread she eats. No, it cannot be...."

"Well, go your own way," exclaimed her aunt, for once honestly angry; "you are of age, and I have no control over you, and I give you up. From beginning to end, your conduct has been so absurd! I call it wicked, quite wicked. Any body but yourself would have been too happy to marry Mr. St. John when he was kind enough to forget all your former conduct, and your poverty, and every thing; and then you would still have been happy at Oaklands. Even if you would not do that, you might, at least, be glad enough to remain in the society where you may be likely to form some other suitable connexion; but, if you choose to throw away all your advantages, to forget all I have done for you, and to sink into a mean, contemptible workwoman or governess, or any thing of that kind, then you must go; but the day will come when you will bitterly repent of your folly." Having delivered this speech, her ladyship left the room; and Louisa

eagerly seized the opportunity of escaping to her own apartment, to collect her thoughts, and come to some more settled resolution.

Meanwhile Lady Frances sought her daughter, her usual oracle and *ressource*; and, having given her an account of the preceding conversation, appealed to her for sympathy, for all the suffering which her affection for her poor dear sister's child brought upon her.

"*C'est jeter le manche après la cognée*," said Minna, shrugging her shoulders; "but it is the usual way with those proud people, and she must e'en take the consequences."

"But think of *me*, my dear," said her mother; "think what a disgrace it will be to have *my* own niece reduced to some dreadful, menial situation."

"It is very mortifying, certainly," replied Minna, coolly, "but I do not see, when she chooses to throw us off, why we need trouble ourselves any more about her. She will be glad enough to hide herself, I suppose; and there is no reason why we should know any thing about her. A few people may ask after her at first; and if we say she is gone abroad, or is staying with some friends in Scotland, she will soon be forgotten, and that will avoid all scandal, and every thing disagreeable to us."

"You always see things in such a proper light, my dear Minna," said her mother, brightening up again; "I wish your cousin had half your good sense; but then, poor thing! she never had a mother to watch over her disposition, and her father only thought of making her more clever and learned than other women. Such useless rubbish! what will it do for her now?"

The question remained unanswered, except by

Minna's sneering laugh, and then the amiable colloquy ended.

As soon as Louisa was sufficiently restored to calmness to do any thing, her first care was to write to Lady Catherine St. John, disclaiming, in the strongest terms, any knowledge of Lady Frances's proposition, and declaring the impossibility of her ever consenting to any plan of the sort; at the same time, she acquainted her with the determination she had come to of rendering herself independent by her own exertions.

Nothing that Lady Frances had said had hurt Louisa so deeply as finding out that she had petitioned Lady Catherine St. John in her favour. Though feeling certain of the kind feelings of the latter towards her, and being herself much fonder of her than of any other of her connexions, still, as St. John's nearest relation, to hold her up to her pity, to be a dependant on her bounty, was a thought not to be endured; and it may be that there was a tone of wounded pride too plainly perceptible in her note. Be this as it might, however, it did not injure her cause with Lady Catherine, who answered her in the most affectionate terms; and as a relation and old friend of her father, took the liberty, as she said, of offering, unasked, her advice upon the step she was about to take.

It was one, she said, which was fraught with inconveniences and difficulties which Louisa could know little about. Setting aside the motives of mere worldly vanity by which Lady Frances wished to sway her, she laid it down as a maxim of real wisdom not to defy the world's opinion; and she feared that its judgment might be harsh when it

was known that Miss Conway had angrily withdrawn herself from all those on whom she had a natural claim, and, from rather overstrained notions of independence, would rather struggle alone with poverty, or live with strangers, than put up with the slight mortifications which her change of fortune might bring upon her, if she continued in her natural sphere.

At the same time, Lady Catherine expressed her entire approval of Louisa's horror of being a burden upon any one; but she suggested that, even while continuing with her aunt, she might do something towards increasing her income, and thus enabling herself to repay some of the expenses which Lady Frances dreaded that her stay would entail upon her; she would render herself at once independent, whilst, at the same time, she remained in her natural home. Willing as she was to exert herself, she might easily, either by painting or by some other means, to be considered of hereafter, earn sufficient, at least, to maintain her wardrobe, whilst she gave up her present income to her aunt. Lady Catherine ended by saying how deeply she regretted that circumstances had prevented Louisa finding a home in her house—a home where she would have been ever welcome and ever valued.

Louisa sighed as she read these last words, but, struggling with the dangerous feelings they awakened, she forced herself to return to the consideration of the former part of the letter. The earnest and affectionate manner in which the advice was urged, and the reasonableness of the argument upon the folly of unnecessarily braving the world's opinion, staggered her for a moment, and she was on the point of making the proposal suggested by

her friend to Lady Frances; but pride came in to overbalance this calmer reflection; she remembered all she had gone through for the last few weeks, and she felt she could not endure such a life any longer. The world's opinion—and what now was the world to her? *One* being only did that world contain in her eyes, and she herself had severed all ties between them; what then was to her henceforth its censure or its scorn?

Other feelings were not backward in lending their aid to pride. When forced to exertion, would not the weight of misery lie less heavy at her heart? When all the energies of her mind were called forth in action, would it not cease to prey with such fierce activity on itself? It seemed less wretched to have to overcome mental suffering for the necessary exertion of daily labour, than to sit still and bid the groanings of the spirit be hushed, that the countenance might wear a smile in society where a tear would find no sympathy; yes, in intense occupation she should find relief to her misery.

It was not sorrow for the loss of her father which weighed so crushingly upon her soul, and which she desired to stifle thus by every means she could employ. No; that sorrow, acute as it was, was a gentle suffering, which brought no bitterness, no self-reproach, no fear to increase its sting; it was a grief in which all these were mingled, which caused Louisa so fierce a struggle—a grief she blushed to yield to, and which this very feeling of humiliation made more intense, as day by day her proud spirit writhed with it in vain; and it was to conquer this, that she now longed to enter upon her plan of active exertion.

She longed for the time when she should find, as she doubted not she should, relief, perhaps, forgetfulness, in the blessed power of activity. She would labour unceasingly, she would tax all the energies of her mind, strain every nerve, exert every faculty to the utmost, till the sickly image of the past faded away; till she should no longer be forced, day by day, to blush at her own weakness, and sink, with a sense of degradation, under the consciousness of her own secret misery.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires
Perpetual sabbath; come, disease and want;
And sad exclusion, through decay of sense;
But leave me unabated trust in thee;
And let thy favour, to the end of life,
Inspire me with ability to seek
Repose and hope among eternal things;—
Father of heaven and earth! and I am rich,
And will possess my portion in content!

WORDSWORTH.

Lady Catherine St. John was grieved to find that Louisa still persisted in her resolution; but she would not yet give up all hopes of persuading her. She wrote to her again, and had a long conversation with her on the subject; at the end of which, she felt convinced that Louisa was swayed by other motives than mere pride and love of independence, and she partly guessed the nature of the feelings we have spoken of in the last chapter.

The more Louisa felt the inefficacy of her efforts to subdue her rebellious affections, and overcome the despondency which had settled so heavily on her mind, the more earnestly she clung to the plan which seemed to throw a gleam of hope on her cheerless path. She could not reason on this subject with her wonted calmness; and, with the feverish excitement, the exaltation of a mind diseased by passion, she thought the task, upon which

she seemed to be now wasting her strength, must be easier in another situation. How common is such sophistry as this! How prone are many, even the best of us, still to see the remedy of every evil in some distant change of circumstances, instead of looking for it at home, in their own hearts, where God has placed a strength, which, if fostered in obedience and faithfulness, will never be found wanting to raise the immortal soul above the petty helps or hindrances of circumstance.

There were times when Louisa longed ardently to enter upon her new mode of existence, and if, at others, she felt any disposition to pause yet a little before she took so decided a step, it was quickly banished by the system of petty persecution Lady Frances and Minna now adopted towards her, and which even a much gentler temper than hers would have found it difficult to endure patiently. Poor Fanny tried to make up for her mother and sister's unfeeling conduct, by increased kindness on her own part; and though it could not shake Louisa's determination, it made her feel that she should quit even that house with regret, since she should leave there one being who loved her, and would grieve to lose her, though the grief would probably not endure long.

Having taken her resolution, she set about carrying it into effect, with characteristic energy. It was now that she felt the full value of the faithful attachment, which had made old Sarah follow her fortunes, for, better or worse; for, had she been alone, there would have been many objections to her plan of independence, which she could not have entirely disregarded. Now the choice of her abode was her greatest difficulty. She pined for

the country; for freedom to range once more, as she had been used to do, amongst the woods and green fields. Poverty, and the many privations it entailed, could not, she thought, be so heavily felt, where so many resources of nature's own providing were within reach: but her other plans interfered with this. London was the great market for intellect, for talent of every kind; and there alone could she hope to find the employment on which she must henceforth depend for her subsistence. She therefore gave up, with a sigh, her visions of a country life, and set off with old Sarah in quest of some lodging, suited to her reduced means, in the great city, where hitherto she had known only the abodes of the wealthy and noble.

After a long search, and much struggling with her own fastidiousness, she, at length, found one which answered her purpose. It was on the outskirts of London, and thus offered the double advantage of a proximity to both town and country. Though very small, it was perfectly clean; and the scanty furniture had only been lately put in, which satisfied Louisa's insurmountable fastidiousness on that point; and she told herself and old Sarah, that it was quite large enough for her wants, and that she should be very comfortable there. It was now necessary to acquaint her aunt with her intention of removing immediately from her house; and on her return home, from her long and fatiguing expedition, she went up into Lady Frances's room for that purpose.

"My dear Louisa," exclaimed the latter, as she entered, "where have you been? You look so hot and dusty. I do wish you would not make such a figure of yourself; you are not *presentable*."

Whilst you are in my house, I really must beg you to take a little more trouble about your appearance; as it is very disagreeable to me that any one should see *my* niece looking as you do now."

"I am sorry that my appearance annoys you," said Louisa, struggling to speak as quietly as possible. "But it will not offend you much longer. I came on purpose to tell you that I have found a lodging that suits me, and that I mean to remove to it as soon as possible. I feel very grateful for all your kindness," she continued, hurriedly, seeing that her aunt was about to speak, "and I know that my long stay here must have been a great constraint and burden to you. It will be better in every way that I should leave you, and make myself independent."

"Make yourself a beggar, you mean, I suppose," exclaimed Lady Frances, angrily. "I hate to hear you talk of independence—it is all your pride and highflown notions about being independent which have brought you to what you are. Your pride made you refuse Mr. St. John; your pride made you reject the assistance your relations were kind enough to offer you; and it is pride now, I suppose, that makes you choose to descend from your proper station in life, and work for your bread like a pauper's child. Well, go your own way; but I warn you, that you will starve. You never can earn your bread—nobody ever did; and you cannot expect that, after your ungrateful return for all I have done for you, I should take any further notice of you, or give you any assistance, when you choose to disgrace your family by such a proceeding."

"I did not expect it; I do not wish for it,"

replied Louisa, with forced calmness. "I am young and strong, with the wish and the ability to work, and I trust I shall be enabled, with God's help, to earn my bread in honesty, and without favour from any one."

"You are certainly the most selfish, the most unfeeling girl, Louisa, to speak so to me, who have done every thing for you. To think of my poor sister's child behaving so! It is enough to break my heart. Well, I say again, go your own way; only remember, I shall feel it my duty to myself and my children to justify myself in the eyes of the world, by telling every body how infamously you have behaved. I cannot let all the world suppose that I have had any hand in my sister's child leaving my house, and degrading herself to a menial station."

"You are at liberty to say what you please. The world is nothing to me; it may blame or approve me as it lists. If I have any friends, who care enough for me to wish to know the truth, I hope my conduct will justify itself. Let me again repeat, however, that I am not ungrateful for your kindness. I know that you meant to do what you could for me, and I thank you for it. Do not let me leave you in anger."

But Lady Frances was angry, and was not to be pacified, for she dreaded the world's opinion of this rupture with her orphan niece. When she found that Louisa was immoveable in her determination, she repeated again, that she might go when and where she pleased; that she washed her hands of all her concerns, and should consider it henceforth her duty to herself and her children to

renounce entirely all intercourse with one who so wilfully degraded herself.

Although Louisa had never felt much affection for her aunt, it was painful to part from her thus; and to feel that she was cast off in anger by her only relative—her mother's sister. Minna's farewell, however, dissipated any scruples she might have had concerning the propriety of persisting in the course she had chosen. There was no plausibility in Minna's nature, and she did not attempt to conceal the joy she felt at being relieved from the constraint of her cousin's presence. She had none of her mother's fears about the opinion of the world, for she believed that the world would take for granted whatever was told it with a sufficient degree of assurance; and in this case there was no fear of Louisa's contradicting any assertion her relations might please to make. She took care, however, to infuse the sting of her sneering malignity into her parting words; for even at that moment, when Louisa was going forth, poor, lonely, and humbled, to earn a scanty livelihood by her own exertions, Minna envied her; envied her for the very superiority with which she rose above adversity, and which all the shafts of her malice were powerless to reduce to her own mean level.

Fanny alone grieved sincerely at her cousin's departure; and friendless as Louisa now was, she felt grateful for the affectionate embrace, and the few heartfelt words by which the kind-hearted girl tried to efface the impression of her mother's and sister's unkindness. Louisa needed some such consolation, when she found herself alone that evening in her narrow lodging. Her few valuables had soon been arranged in the two small rooms

which were henceforth to be her abode. Her painting materials were unpacked, and placed in readiness for the morrow; her solitary dinner had been quickly despatched, and now that there was nothing more to be done, that the day's excitement was over, and old Sarah had left her to go to bed, she sat down alone by the bright empty hearth, and the sense of her desolation fell heavily and chillingly upon her.

The night before, when she was sitting in her aunt's luxurious drawing-room, and Lady Frances's drawling voice and Minna's sharp sneering tone were sounding in her ears, she had longed for the solitude of her present dwelling. Now that solitude oppressed her. She was half tempted to wake old Sarah again, that she might hear the sound of some familiar voice. Never, since the day when she first became conscious of her father's death, had she so keenly felt her orphan state. Every thing seemed desolate around her; yet the room, chill and scantily furnished as it was, oppressed her by its smallness. She could hardly breathe: all the bright hopes she had built upon the strenuous exertions she was to make, faded one by one, as she thought that in this narrow space even her mind must be confined and bowed down to the grovelling limits of sense. At length, unable to bear this oppression any longer, she started from her seat and went to the window; she threw it wide open, and leant eagerly out, as if gasping for air.

The mild autumn breeze blew freshly on her temples, and gradually she felt the weight at her heart grow less oppressive. The narrow street was now silent and deserted, and the crowd of

human habitations lying so thickly around were hushed, as though they had been the dwellings of the dead. The dirt and meanness of every object which had disgusted her in the day were now veiled in the deep shadow of night.

She raised her eyes to the starry heavens; all there was glory and magnificence. Myriads of sparkling luminaries were shining forth from the depths of the cloudless vault, confounding the sense by their infinitude; and, as Louisa gazed, all low thoughts, all fears, all repinings, passed away from her. Within, every thing might be dark and dreary, but without, how unspeakably beautiful! What, though her habitation was changed from the sumptuous mansions of opulence to the abode of poverty, perchance of struggling want, beyond those narrow walls the *Infinite* was still hers to enjoy. This heavenly magnificence was among the pleasures which money could not buy, nor Fortune's tricks deprive her of. There it shone everlasting, only varying from splendour to splendour, regaling the senses of the squalid beggar, who might feel consoled, as he gazed upon it, that his hard couch had no other canopy; inspiring the poet in his midnight watchings; instilling some perception of the beauty of holiness even into the degraded soul of the man of pleasure, as he chances to lift up his feverish glance from the earth, with whose luxuries he was satiated, to the heaven he has forgotten.

Yea, shining and beautiful they shine on high—those everlasting stars—suns of other systems, tracing in their lofty course unceasing warnings to man; of the littleness of his cares on this planet, which he calls a world, whilst the very sun round

which it revolves, as the humblest of satellites, is itself but an atom in the infinitude of the universe. There they shine, ever striving, as it were, to aid man's inability to realize and live for the higher and unseen things which are eternal; night after night unfolding to him a magnificence which exalts his perceptions of beauty, and pours the spirit of celestial harmony into his soul. There they shine unwearied, silent, yet preaching forth truths sublime, in characters of living fire, when darkness has thrown her veil over all the mournful inequalities of human life; speaking the same high language to all earth's toiling sons, reminding them that God's glorious universe is around all alike, in which the immortal spirit may expand itself, free from all the trammels of its earthly existence.

Thoughts like these stole over Louisa's heart as she watched by her open window, till the narrow and desolate room within was forgotten, and her soul drank in, at the purest sources, a fresh supply of strength and hope.

"No! I am not deserted—not alone," murmured she; "each of those silent stars seems to tell me that the same all-seeing eye which watches their appointed paths watches over mine also, which is not less appointed by Him because it is lowly and obscure. Even at this distance the space between those countless worlds seems annihilated, and their confines appear to touch; how much more, when looked upon from the height of our immortality, shall the short space between man's birth and his death narrow into insignificance, and one little life appear but a point in the immeasurable circle of eternity! What matters, then, whether this short passage of a never-ending existence be smooth or

tempestuous, so long as the exercise of our highest faculties is left to us, so long as we do not allow the weight of earthly misfortune to crush our nobler self, but, through the ruggedness of our mortal path, nourish within us the consciousness of our high destiny! And thus may I walk on my solitary and cheerless way, with thoughts and aspirations fixed on the lofty hopes, which are my birthright, my inalienable inheritance, even as the mariner, crossing the stormy ocean, keeps his eye steadily and faithfully fixed on yon bright star, heedless of the turbulence of the waves, whilst he can steer his course aright!"

When Louisa at last turned slowly and reluctantly from the window, the fears and oppression which had weighed her down before were gone. She lay down to rest with cheerful and hopeful thoughts, and, for the first time for many weary nights, the lonely girl did not return in her dreams to the troubled scenes of life, but, following the train of her last waking thoughts, her spirit was wrapt in visions of hope and glory.

The next morning the influence of those lofty meditations was still active; and her voice was so cheerful when she spoke to old Sarah, that the tears rushed to the faithful creature's eyes, and she thanked God for the joy of hearing her young mistress speak like her own dear self again. Louisa had not taken her present decided step without some settled plan for earning a maintenance. A few days before her removal she had taken some of her drawings for sale to a large print-shop in the city, which Lady Catherine had recommended to her, and she had been told to return on this day for an answer respecting them. She was now impa-

a hackney-coach. After
her purse, she found it was
present uncertainty, to this.
The fare for such a distance
she was warranted in paying
it by merely conquering her
alone.

She looked out on the
back again. The number
that comparatively deserted
to her, and what would it
thoroughfares! There, to
whom she knew, and who
her; and she was not yet
change of circumstances,
per calmness. She hesitated
to do, and for a moment
going, and writing a note
he had expressly told her
what was she afraid of
women, quite as young as
streets alone! Why should
what so many others did
much more that was equal
and by the time she had

At first she kept her veil carefully folded over her face, and glided stealthily and tremblingly along, shrinking from every passer by; but, as she went on, she grew ashamed of her own weakness, and forced her mind away from its fears, to dwell upon the interview which was awaiting her. The device was successful. She forgot her present situation in her anxious anticipations, and in her hopes of the pleasant activity consequent upon her receiving orders from the printseller.

Thus excited, she walked on at a rapid pace, and reached the shop where she had left her drawings in a time so short that it astonished herself. Some of her former qualms came over her again now, although she struggled against them; and she inquired, with a deep blush, and in a trembling voice, the fate of her drawings. The shopman to whom she addressed herself seemed perfectly ignorant of their existence. He would go and inquire, he said; but he was not aware that there was any message from Mr. B. for her. Louisa now first learnt one of life's hardest lessons. What was hope and life to her, was a matter of complete indifference to this man; and, as he moved listlessly off to make the inquiry, she sank into a chair, and, for the first time, perceived that she had over-exerted herself.

The shopman returned in a few minutes, which had seemed hours to Louisa, and in a more respectful tone begged that she would follow him into the back room, where Mr. B. would speak to her himself. Mr. B. received her with the utmost civility. He was a man of sufficient acuteness and independence of mind to be able to appreciate talent in whatever guise it came, and his knowledge of the world enabled him at first sight to read much of the his-

tient to go there ; and, as soon as breakfast was over, she prepared for her walk.

It then first occurred to her that she had a long way before her, and that, although she might be equal to the exertion, old Sarah certainly was not. There was no alternative but to go alone, or to take a hackney-coach. After an anxious examination of her purse, she found it would be imprudent, in her present uncertainty, to think of the latter expedient. The fare for such a distance would be larger than she was warranted in paying, when she could avoid it by merely conquering her foolish fear of walking alone.

She looked out on the street, but quickly shrank back again. The number of passengers, even in that comparatively deserted quarter, seemed awful to her, and what would it be in the more populous thoroughfares ! There, too, she might meet people whom she knew, and who would perhaps recognize her ; and she was not yet sufficiently inured to her change of circumstances, to think of this with proper calmness. She hesitated for some time what to do, and for a moment determined on giving up going, and writing a note to Mr. B. instead. But he had expressly told her to call ; and, after all, what was she afraid of ? Did she not daily see women, quite as young as herself, walking in the streets alone ! Why should she shrink from doing what so many others did ! She said all this, and much more that was equally undeniable, to Sarah ; and, by the time she had succeeded in quieting a little the old woman's apprehensions, she found her own were somewhat dissipated, and, mustering up all her courage, she set resolutely forth on her solitary expedition.

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tory of his present visitor in her manner and address. He politely offered her a seat, of which she gladly availed herself, for her limbs trembled so as to make it difficult for her to stand; and then, in the gentlest manner possible, he expressed his regret that her drawings were not such as he was in the habit of selling, and that he must therefore return them to her.

"At the same time," he added, seeing the effect of his words on Louisa's countenance, "they are so superior to the generality of those which come under my notice, that I am most unwilling to say any thing which may sound like discouragement to so promising an artist. Are they your own, ma'am?"

"Yes; but they were hastily selected from a large number, as I have been too ill to draw lately, and I think I could promise you something better."

Poor Louisa's voice faltered, and her face flushed crimson as she uttered these words, which seemed to her almost akin to begging.

"Pray do not misunderstand me," replied the kind-hearted publisher. "I am far from finding fault with these, and should be glad to purchase them. But there is not such a demand at present for this style of drawing as would justify my doing so."

Louisa thanked him in a few hurried words for his kind praises, and began tying up the portfolio with trembling fingers, in preparation to depart, when Mr. B. added,

"If it would suit you, ma'am, to leave them with me to be exposed for sale, I shall be happy to be of what use to you I can in that manner. Perhaps they will have a better chance here than you could give them in any other way."

Louisa warmly expressed her thanks for this considerate offer, and was about to take her leave, when Mr. B—— requested her to give him her name and address. It was the first time she had been called upon to do so since the change in her fortune, and for a moment she hesitated whether she should give her name. Let no reader, proud in untried strength, smile at her weakness. It is easy, in theory, to estimate popular prejudices most justly, and weigh their worth in the balance of philosophy; but we do not know, till we are called upon to put our theory into practice, how closely wrapped around us is that tissue of prejudices and arbitrary distinctions, which, differing in texture according to the different circumstances of our lot, is yet woven round each of us from the cradle; twining round our secret feelings, and modifying our habits of thought, as well as circumscribing our outward actions.

It is the highest effort of our matured reason to divest ourselves of its trammels, and few and happy are those who succeed. Louisa Conway was very young; what wonder, then, that some shreds thereof hung round her still? But it was not such a mind as hers, that would long submit to their thralldom. Her blush of embarrassment soon changed into one of shame at the weakness of such pride, and she wrote the required address with her usual clear, free hand, in which no sign of indecision or weakness could be traced.

Her walk back to her lodging seemed long and weary, for she had no longer the hope, which buoyed her up in the morning, to beguile her solitary way. When she reached home, she found

that she had much over-rated her strength; and, although she summoned up a cheerful smile to answer old Sarah's anxious greeting, her endeavours were vain to conceal her complete exhaustion, and when she sent away her untouched dinner, she was forced to yield to Sarah's entreaties, that she would lie down to rest for a few hours.

Her utter weariness of body and mind was so far favourable to her, that she soon sank into the blessed forgetfulness of sleep. Blessed, indeed! for who, on this ever rolling world, could bear the "toil and travail, cark and care," of life, but for that momentary respite? Doth it not bring solace to the wretched, and rest to the weary? Do we not forget, in its fantastic visions; our restless hopes and fears, and live another life, when darkness shuts out this? Doth it not level all the inequalities of human existence, visiting with more dewy rest the overworked labourer, than the rich man wearied with his strenuous idleness? Doth it not make the strong as helpless as the weak, and even to the guilty bring back something of the peacefulness, the trustfulness of childhood? Blessed, indeed, is sleep, the image of death, in whose still chambers, as in the grave, "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

When Louisa awoke from her short slumber, she felt its beneficial influence. Her mind was refreshed and strengthened, and, in spite of the morning's disappointment, she could again find comfort in the reflections which, the evening before, had brought her such solace. Old Sarah was watching by her bed-side, and the sight of that affectionate face did more to drive away desponding thoughts, than all her philosophy.

"I've just lighted a bit of fire in the grate, my dear, for I feared you might be chilly, after over-tiring yourself," said the old woman, as Louisa sprang lightly from the bed. "And I've set out the tea-things, and I hope you'll be able to take your tea. But another day you must not do so much, and be too tired to eat your dinner."

"I think it is a very economical plan," said Louisa, smiling, "and you know, Sarah, I must learn economy now."

"Ah, but it's no economy, my dear, to waste your strength; you'll want it all, as you will soon find. I know more about working for bread than you do, and you may believe me. Well, it's a hard thing to think of your coming to this; but it's no use talking about it; so come and sit down here, and let me make you comfortable."

"Where did that arm-chair come from?" asked Louisa, as she entered the little sitting-room, now looking comfortable in the blaze of the fire, on which the teakettle was cheerily hissing. "It surely was not here before; at least, I did not see it."

Sarah explained that she had seen it that morning in the front parlour of the other floor, and that, with some management on her part, she had induced their landlady, Mrs. Brown, to allow Miss Conway to have the use of it, at least, till the other floor was let.

"It's not exactly what you've been used to, to be sure, as I told Mrs. Brown, for there is no use, you know, in letting oneself down in the eyes of these kind of people; but I thought it would be more comfortable for you than these straw chairs."

"It is perfectly luxurious," said Louisa, "and

I am not sure that I ought to indulge in such a comfort, lest it should make me too idle to work. However, I shall sit in it now, whilst I reflect upon the matter."

And with a smile, which cheered old Sarah's heart like summer sunshine, Louisa seated herself in the old chair, which, at Oaklands, would scarcely have been admitted into the housekeeper's room; and when Sarah had stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, and snuffed the candle, and placed before her a cup of hot, well-made tea, she was surprised to find how much at home she already felt in her humble lodging, and her eyes filled with tears of gratitude to the faithful friend who had clung to her in her poverty, and lightened its heavy burden by her sympathy and affection.

CHAPTER IX.

“ I leap’d ashore
Indignantly—resolved to be a man,
Who, having o’er the past no power, would live
No longer in subjection to the past,
With abject mind.”

WORDSWORTH.

“ Love is not to be reasoned down or lost
In high ambition, or a thirst for greatness.
’Tis second life, it grows into the soul,
Warms every vein, and beats in every pulse.”

ADDISON.

Since Louisa had written to Reginald, there had been so much to fill her thoughts, she had been called upon to make such continual exertions, that she had hardly had leisure to be impatient for his answer. But now, in her solitude, her thoughts reverted frequently to the once loved companion, the cherished brother and friend of many years, and she felt his loss more acutely than she had ever yet done.

It was not only that he was gone, but the manner of their separation added to her sorrow; he had not been taken from her by the stroke of death—the inevitable blow which had deprived her of her last earthly support—but by the hand of discord. Some unseen, malign influence seemed to have interposed to rob her of one, who, in all her desola-

tion, would yet have been a comfort and a stay. In these reflections there was bitterness beyond the grief of separation, for her conscience could not be wholly at rest; the more wretched she had since been, the more did she reproach herself for her conduct towards him who warned her in affectionate sincerity, and whose warning she had repelled with pride and scorn; and it was only in looking to the future, that she could find comfort.

"All will yet be well," was her reflection, after long and sad pondering upon this subject—"he must soon answer the letter which I have written, and he must be changed, indeed, if he rejects my assurance of regret for the past, and my offers of peace and affection made at such a time. Had I remained prosperous and happy, he might have passed on his way in pride, but Reginald could not wound me now! The world cannot have changed such a heart as his once was, so as to make him resent the wrong done long ago, and, for which, God knows, he has been revenged enough—if he knew all." And here a burning tear fell upon her cheek, and startled her from the reverie into which she had fallen.

Meanwhile, Reginald was little aware how anxiously her thoughts were turned towards him. It was, as we have seen, under the influence of passion that he accepted the appointment which took him out of England, and which he welcomed for that very reason; his feelings towards Louisa making any place preferable to that where he might be daily exposed to see her in the society of his rival, and soon, as he doubted not, bound to him by the holiest of ties. He could not conceal from himself, that, in a worldly point of view, he was acting

against his own interest in leaving England at this moment, and thus abandoning all prospect of parliamentary distinction, of success in the career for which he felt himself peculiarly fitted; but there was something almost congenial in this fresh disappointment to his bitter feelings; for her he had toiled—for her he had aspired after fame—and now his life was left objectless, and he cared no longer for all he had so prized before.

In this state of gloomy despondency did he remain during his long voyage; the unusual monotony and forced inactivity of such a life helping to weigh down, for a time, all his energies. But such a state was too unnatural for a stirring mind to continue long in; and, on reaching his destination, the fresh interest awakened by his arrival in a new country, and the prospect of entering on the duties of his new office, somewhat revived his activity, and his languid indifference gave way to a craving desire for labour and excitement.

Fortunately, neither were wanting. There was a new language to be learnt; the political state of the country to be studied; and it was at that period sufficiently disturbed to require the greatest attention and the keenest penetration.

The post which he occupied, also, and which he would not have accepted under different circumstances, as being too subordinate, and therefore offering little probability of distinction, proved less barren than he had anticipated. His chief, Sir Robert Fullerton, was an indolent man, fearing trouble and responsibility, pleased to find any one who would incur either in his place, and being also fortunately easy tempered and open to conviction, he was glad to follow advice, and to leave all the

more arduous part of his duties to his young secretary, whose activity and energy, now they were once more roused, seemed to create a pleasant sort of surprise in him, but excited no jealousy of his interference. Thus, Reginald had fuller scope for his abilities than he had ventured to hope for, and in this new activity he found the best solace for his wounded feelings. His thoughts were forcibly diverted from dwelling on the bitter past, and, though the recollection of Louisa and St. John had not lost its torturing power, he could turn from it, and, for a time, banish it from his mind.

Since he left England, he had not written to Sir Charles Conway; it was too painful an effort to write cautiously and reservedly to his adopted father; it seemed easier to renounce all communication with him; but now that he had once more awakened to other thoughts and interests, he felt the effort would be less painful, and he longed to disburden his conscience of the load which the mere appearance of neglect or ingratitude to Sir Charles left upon it, and he resolved not to let another packet start without writing to him. Accordingly, he sat down, without delay, to fulfil his resolution; and it was with a renewal of the best feelings of his early youth that he now wrote to his old friend, fully and affectionately detailing all his plans and occupations, his anticipations of success, and hopes of future advancement; he even spoke of Louisa somewhat in the tone of former days, for his thoughts had flown back to his early home, and his rival was for a moment forgotten.

This long epistle was finished, and only left open to add a few last words, whenever the mail should be ready to close. But, before that day

arrived, the English packet was announced to be in sight, and Reginald was soon engaged in the bustle of examining public despatches and minuting letters; glad to have the means of forgetting, if possible, his disappointment at finding no private ones for himself amongst them; not even Annesley had written; and, when his business was over, he turned to extract what news he could from the papers, since every thing of closer interest was denied him. He had not been long employed thus, when the following paragraph riveted his attention—

“Died, at his seat of Oaklands, county of —, Sir Charles Conway, bart., aged 50.”

The paper dropped from his hand, and the big tears rolled down his manly cheek. The noble being he had loved and revered from childhood was then gone; that useful life was cut short, and *he* had willingly estranged himself from him during the last few months of his existence, and had wounded his generous heart by conduct which bore all the semblance of ingratitude.

The tide of grief was strong, and he only roused himself to remember that the mail for England would start the following day, and that, in addition to his official task on such occasions, he must now perform the melancholy duty of writing to Louisa Conway. A difficult task he felt it would be, to write at such a moment, without giving full vent to all the feelings of his heart; but all bitterness was at least destroyed. Louisa was in sorrow, and, let her feelings towards him be what they might, it was his to console her, as far as human sympathy could console; and who could estimate the loss of such a father so well as he, who had been

his adopted son—who had shared with her his care and affection?

He was not long in executing his intention, and his letter breathed the kindly spirit of former days, and a depth of gentle tenderness which few who knew him would have thought his seemingly stern nature capable of. St. John was forgotten; all rivalries and disappointments cast aside; and he thought only of Louisa, his long-loved, his dearly-valued, his more than friend or sister, as he wrote every kind and soothing word which can bear comfort to the broken-hearted, regretting, in the warmest terms, that he had left England, and was unable to fly instantly to her, and assuring her, that nothing but the impossibility of leaving his official duty should detain him from her at such a time.

This letter was a relief to his overburdened heart. There are moments when such an out-pouring is a positive want of nature, and we feel that even to have vented some part of our feelings in tracing, on the senseless paper, characters that may never even meet another eye, is, so to speak, a safety-valve for our reason. Thus felt Reginald when he closed this letter, and turned to pick up the papers, and put them away before he repaired to his office. As he did so, the name of Conway, in another column, once more attracted his attention, and his whole countenance changed as he read the following words.

“The funeral of Sir Charles Conway took place yesterday, amidst the general regrets of his friends and dependants. Miss Conway, only daughter of Sir Charles, remains for the present at Oaklands, and will shortly be united in marriage to Arthur

St. John, Esq., the sole heir of her father's extensive property."

Had the head of Medusa been suddenly turned upon Reginald, he could not have been more surely petrified, or all his newly-awakened feelings more effectually turned to marble. Yet, why should he have been surprised? Had he not left England to avoid witnessing this very marriage? Had he since found any grounds for hoping it would not take place? None; yet, it seemed to come upon him with the force of an unexpected blow, withering all the kindly feelings which had but so lately revived. He started up, threw down the newspaper; then seized it again—and again the same paragraph was before him. It seemed to have enlarged, the letters had spread, till the wide sheet contained nothing else; he tore it in pieces, and then around—above him, the words seemed traced in letters of fire upon the walls, upon every object which met his gaze.

His eye fell upon the two letters he had written;—the one, which death had made useless; the other, so lately traced in a far different mood. He seized them both, and throwing them into the fire, stood watching their destruction, with the sort of mad triumph with which one may imagine the maniac, who has set fire to his own house, watching each rafter as the bright flame devours it; this done, he darted forth, met acquaintances without knowing them, hastily passed his office, without remembering that his presence was required there, and did not recover his senses till twilight found him many miles from the town, and a pouring rain began to beat down upon his uncovered head.

More slowly than he had walked in his high

state of excitement, he now retraced his steps; and weary, drenched to the skin, sick in mind and body, he at length reached his room; but not to find repose, for a note from Sir Robert awaited him to say, that certain papers must be prepared for the mail, which started next morning, and Reginald was soon once more seated at his desk, and forced to turn his mind to other thoughts; perhaps, in such a case, a better expedient for finally attaining rest, than the vain tossing of the weary head upon the pillow, applying all outward means for repose, whilst the brain is burning and throbbing within. Before morning, Reginald was a man again, altered since the day before;—once more hardened and embittered, but still a man in purpose and in action, and alive to man's active duties and motives of exertion;—once more bent upon making to himself an existence, within whose bright steel circle, affections and feelings, with all their weakening influences, should have no place.

In this mood, work was welcome to him, and though his habitual associates perceived a difference in his demeanour, and regretted to see that he was sinking back into the gloomy, unsocial being he had been on his first arrival, his official superiors could find no fault with his zeal, which seemed to have increased as he lost all taste for society and amusement. Good-natured, indolent Sir Robert, wondered more and more at the vast quantity of disposable energy his young assistant ever seemed to have at his command, and at the rapidity with which he had acquired an intimate knowledge of the state of the country, its language, and political position, internal and external. If he wanted information, which he sought in vain

from the different *employés*, he seldom failed to find Reginald possessed of it. Sleepless nights were passed in reading, and the fruits of that study were shown in pamphlets and reports, where the information he owed to his indefatigable researches appeared in that lucid, forcible arrangement which denotes a clear head and a powerful intellect. Thus, while his popularity decreased, and many lamented that the clever, handsome Mr. Talbot should lead such a strange life, his talents commanded general admiration, and his kind-hearted chief missed no opportunity of bringing them into notice with the government at home: but success is not happiness, as the proud career of many an ambitious man has proved; nor can the loud chorus of praise drown the voice within which cries for peace, when there is no peace.

Reginald had yet a hard lesson to learn—that the human heart is not vainly created with all its warm feelings, its fountains of love and joy, and hope—not vainly with that yearning for human sympathy and affection, which, in youth, when the voice of nature is strongest and purest, makes us shrink from the thought of loneliness. In his pride, he dared to say, that God had created within him needless faculties, and that he, with the strong might of his will, would crush them, and be happy! And he had to learn, that pride was leading him astray—that, with such a guide, he might climb the rocky ascent, and stand upon the cold, naked pinnacle of worldly glory, but that no flowers would spring up in his path, no sunshine illumine the prospect.

But such a lesson is long to learn, and, meanwhile, Reginald toiled on assiduously, and looked

back, with bitter scorn, to his past weakness, and cased himself more and more firmly in his steel armour, as another and another packet came, and brought him no letters from England. Once or twice, conscience smote him with a kind of remorse at the seemingly unfeeling conduct he was pursuing towards Louisa, in not writing to her. If it were but a formal letter of condolence, it would have been no more than the act of common courtesy, even of an acquaintance; but he quieted the uncomfortable suggestion, by saying, he would wait till another mail should arrive; and still the mails brought him nothing.

"She naturally considers," he exclaims, "that her father's death, and her own marriage, dissolves all remaining connexion between us. Is it for me to intrude myself on the notice of Mr. St. John's wife?"

He started up at the thought, as if a serpent had stung him, and, henceforth, indulged still more in his bitter indignation.

One day, that he was not aware that the English packet had arrived, as he entered Sir Robert Fullerton's apartment, the latter cried out to him:

"Here are plenty of despatches for you, my dear Talbot, but there is also a private letter, which I was glad to see, as I think you have been annoyed at not receiving any lately."

"I have been very foolish then," said Reginald, colouring at the thought that his feelings had been partly read. "It is natural enough for our friends to forget us, when the wide ocean divides us from them."

"I am sorry to hear you say so, my dear fellow; you are too young for mistrust; I have lived double your years in the world, and have always

found that those old proverbs about the ingratitude and forgetfulness of friends are most mischievous lies; but I will not preach my experience now, when you are dying for your letter. Here it is—when I return, I want you to read these papers.”

So saying, the good-natured man quitted the room, leaving Reginald to the solitary perusal of his letter.

For a moment, after he had taken it in his hands, he was too agitated to distinguish the writing, and a strange revolution took place in his whole being; but, another moment, and it was over. The letter was not from Louisa, and Reginald was hardly capable then of feeling pleasure at the sight of Annesley's writing. There was much in this epistle which was mysterious to him, for there had evidently been one written before, giving a detail of circumstances to which allusion only was made here; however, after a second perusal, Reginald arrived at the knowledge of Ellen's faithlessness, and of her marriage with Lord Caldwell.

“They are all alike,” was his bitter exclamation; “and if vows like hers were thus easily broken, how could I—fool as I was—think that the mere tie of early affection could be more binding?”

There were a few words only about Louisa, which he eagerly read:

“I have not seen Miss Conway since she went to town; but I hear that she is quite well again. Her affairs are not yet settled, for, at present, I understand, there is some disagreement between Mr. St. John and her lawyer, which, however, will, no doubt, soon be satisfactorily terminated; but

we know her enough to feel sure that money matters are little in her thoughts at such a time."

This allusion to Louisa's pecuniary difficulties, with which Edward thought Reginald acquainted, was naturally construed, by the latter, as relating to marriage settlements, &c., and he crushed the letter in his hands, as he paced violently up and down the room; and he had hardly recovered his self-command when Sir Robert returned. The sight of official documents and papers soon brought back his thoughts into their habitual channel, and, in a few minutes, his attention was riveted on the business before him; and it was not till night that he had leisure again to read his friend's letter.

Then, as he clearly perceived that Edward wrote alluding to some former packet, which he had never received, the thought suddenly flashed across his mind, that Louisa also might have written—that her letter, perhaps a sorrowing one, full of grief, and wanting consolation—remembering their old affection, and calling upon his sympathy;—such a letter might have been written, and lost with Annesley's. His heart leaped within him at the thought, and, subdued and softened, he was ready to answer it as though he had in truth read the touching appeal; when the demon of jealousy whispered in his ear, and poisoned once more the newly-opened fountain. What if she had written? it could only be a constrained, formal letter, for Louisa was no hypocrite; and what could she have to say to *him*?—she, the affianced bride of St. John—probably, now his wife. What sympathy could there be between them? What need had she of his consolation? Was not her chosen support at her side? Was he not there, to whis-

per words of comfort in impassioned tones, which found an echo in her heart?

"No," he exclaimed, aloud, "she little wants me, or heeds my silence. Maybe she *forgot* to write to me; and shall I record the feelings which I scorn myself for not having utterly torn out? shall I utter my deep sympathy, that it may be submitted, with cool indifference, to his approval, and then cast aside, while she drinks in the tones of *his* loved voice? No, no! fool I have been; but I have not sunk so low as that. Thank God! I can be cold and hard, and find happiness elsewhere. Madman is he who would trust his to woman's love! a weak boy's dream."

With these sage reflections, he abandoned all thoughts of renewing his intercourse with Louisa Conway; and when he wrote to Edward, though his bitterness pierced through all the consolation he offered him on his sudden bereavement, he never mentioned her name. He had pined enough—too much; for Edward had known what he once suffered; but now he should never see that he was wounded by her silence. He might speak of it to her, and in the midst of her happiness she might *pity him*. That, at least, should not be in her power; and in triumphant pride he closed his letter.

CHAPTER X.

"Small is it that thou canst trample the Earth, with its injuries, under thy feet, as old Greek Zeno trained thee: thou canst love the Earth while it injures thee, and even because it injures thee; for this a greater than Zeno was needed, and he too was sent."—CARLYLE—*Sartor Resartus*.

The London season had been over some time, and the Montagues were on the eve of leaving town to begin the round of visits, which Lady Frances had spoken of to Louisa as necessary to recruit her finances, after the heavy expences of the spring campaign, when one morning, as she and Minna were sitting in the drawing-room, talking over their arrangements, they were surprised by a knock at the door.

"Who can be come so early? I did not think we had an acquaintance left in town," exclaimed Lady Frances.

"I dare say it is Sir Willoughby," said Minna, rising to ascertain, at the glass, whether her curls were in proper array for such a visitor. "He is still in town, I know, for I saw his cabriolet yesterday; and, I suppose, he is come to pay a farewell visit."

"Very likely," said her mother, smiling in inward triumph, as she read her daughter's thoughts. "By the bye, if you wish it, Minna, you know we could

easily get him asked to Ravenhurst. Dear Lady Burton has no daughters of her own, and I am sure she will be glad to do any thing for you."

"Yes; but as we shall be sure to meet him again at Brighton, there is no use in giving him such open encouragement. Something better might turn up, you know, and then it would be awkward to have entangled oneself. It will do him no harm to keep him a little in suspense."

"None at all, certainly. But mind, my dear child, I could not bear to see you acting as a coquette. It never answers for a girl, and is very wrong, very improper. That *is* Sir Willoughby's step, I am sure. Come and sit here, my dear; that light is dreadful for your complexion."

Minna had only time to effect this change of position before the door was thrown open, and the servant announced Mr. Annesley.

Both mother and daughter uttered an exclamation of surprise, and scarcely attempted to conceal their disappointment as they received the unwelcome visitor with cold politeness.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Annesley," said Lady Frances. "I scarcely expected to see you in town."

"I came up yesterday on some business of Mr. Allen's," replied Edward, "and intend returning to-morrow, if possible; but, although so much hurried, I have taken the liberty to call upon you to inquire after Miss Conway."

"Miss Conway left my house some weeks ago," said Lady Frances, with great dignity, "under circumstances which made it impossible for me to maintain any further intercourse with her; and, of course, I have neither seen nor heard of her since."

Edward did not see the necessary sequence, but he contented himself with looking his astonishment.

"She wrote to Mrs. Allen to inform her of her intended removal," said he, "and promised to write again; but this promise she has not fulfilled, and our anxiety about her induced me to come here."

"You could not have come to a worse place. I know nothing of her. Deeply as it grieves me to say so, her conduct was such as to force me to renounce her altogether, in justice to my own daughters. I am sorry she has added to all her other follies, that of exposing her degradation to strangers."

"My mother could scarcely be considered a stranger by Miss Conway; and it would be difficult to make her believe in the possibility of Miss Conway's degrading herself. However, I will not dwell on a subject apparently so disagreeable to you; and if you will have the kindness to give me her address, I will not trouble you any further."

"I assure you, we are quite ignorant of Louisa's proceedings," said Minna, coming to her mother's aid, lest she should not have boldness enough to carry on the required falsehood. "As she chose to cut the connexion, we did not think it necessary to run after her. She may, very likely, have left London, as she was always so fond of woods and purling streams; perhaps she is gone abroad for economy, though I should think old Sarah would prove rather a troublesome travelling companion."

"We were very glad to hear that that faithful creature had not deserted her mistress," said Edward. "She has shown a better sense of Miss Conway's worth than many who should have been

more capable of appreciating it. She, at least, will watch over her with kindness and affection."

"It is, at all events, more respectable for Miss Conway to have such a companion than to be hiding in obscure lodgings utterly alone. Certainly, her pride took the strangest turn when it led her to choose such a mode of life."

"It is quite shocking to think of," said Lady Frances, sighing; "and, I assure you, Mr. Annesley, I left no means untried to prevent it. But she was always self-willed and obstinate, and she would go her own way. It nearly broke my heart; and, indeed, I have been obliged to forbid the subject being mentioned before me, as my nerves are unequal to the trial. Pray, do not let us say any thing more about it."

After this plain hint, Edward could but rise and take his leave, saying, that as they could not give him any information, he must lose no time in trying to obtain it by other means.

"She will not see you, if you do find her out," cried Minna, provoked at his pertinacity. "She cut all her old acquaintance while she was with us, and I do not suppose that her *sauvagerie* has decreased in her solitude."

"I shall try, at all events," said Edward, and he left the room, glad that he had been able to restrain the expression of his disgust and indignation. In the hall he found a servant, whom he remembered to have seen at Oaklands, as Sir Charles's valet, the year before; and, in the hopes of getting some information about Louisa, he stopped to speak to him.

"Were you here, when Miss Conway went away?"

"No, sir, I came just afterwards."

"Then you cannot tell me her present address?"

"No, sir."

"Surely, somebody in the house must recollect where her things were sent to. Do go, my good fellow, and see if you can find out for me."

"I'm sure I would, with all my heart," said the man, who had lived some time with Sir Charles Conway, and remembered, with gratitude, his kind master and mistress. "People say that Miss Conway is sadly in want of her old friends now. If you will step into the dining-room, sir, I will go and inquire, but I know my lady desired that every body should be told that Miss Conway had left no address."

Edward sat down in the dining-room, and the man went on his errand. He returned, after some minutes delay, with the wished-for direction, which Louisa had left with the butler, in case any letters came for her. Furnished with this, Annesley lost no time in proceeding to her lodgings. She was at home, and remembering Minna's assurance that she would not see him, he thought it better not to allow her the alternative of refusing him, and walked up stairs unannounced.

Louisa was at her usual post, busily, though sadly employed, at her easel, when Annesley knocked at the door, and the brush fell out of her hand, as she raised her head and recognised her visitor.

"I hope I am not a very unwelcome intruder," said he, advancing towards her. "I came unannounced, as I was told you had renounced all your former acquaintances, and I was determined that

you should at least turn me out yourself, if you wished to do so."

"I assure you I have no such wish," said Louisa, eagerly holding out her hand. "I am too lonely now, not to welcome gladly the appearance of a friend."

"I am very glad to hear you say so. I heard a different account; but I chose to judge for myself, and I am now delighted that I did."

"I suppose you have been to the Montagues, and found me out through them?"

Edward gave an account of his visit to her relations, touching as slightly as possible on their unfeeling conduct, for fear of wounding her. Louisa was at no loss, however, to guess the truth, and she thanked him warmly for the kind interest in her fate, which had made him persist in his intentions, notwithstanding all the difficulties which had been thrown in his way.

After they had got over the first slight embarrassment, which naturally attended their meeting, under circumstances so new and strange, their conversation flowed rapidly on. Louisa was anxious to hear everything about Oaklands. She would have liked to inquire about every particular spot, every familiar face; and Edward, anticipating her wishes, was as copious in his details as she could desire. She was much astonished when he mentioned that the abbey now belonged to Lord Ethelwode, who had already given orders that Lord Caldwell's splendid mansion should be pulled down without delay; and suspicions that Ellen had been foully dealt with by her stepfather, added to the sorrow with which she contemplated her friend's fate.

"I have been left in complete solitude, since I came here," said she, seeking an opportunity of mentioning Ellen, as she saw Edward's anxiety to hear something of her, although he could not bring himself to make a direct inquiry. "Reginald Talbot has left my letter unanswered, which I cannot account for, and Lady Caldwell is equally silent. She is in Paris, but that is all I know of her."

"I hope she will not remain long abroad. I shall be glad when she is once more within reach of your influence," said Edward, in a voice which trembled in spite of his effort to steady it.

"Our paths in life are now so widely asunder," replied Louisa, "that I fear our separation would be little less complete, even if she were in England."

"Do not say so, Miss Conway. Do not cease to watch over her, to advise her as you used to do."

"Alas, my watching was of little avail?" said Louisa, almost involuntarily.

Edward rose and walked to the window, and for a few minutes both were silent. When they spoke again, it was on a different subject.

"Is this your own design?" asked Edward, examining the unfinished picture that lay on the easel; "that group is very beautiful."

"The group is from fancy, but the landscape is taken from one of my old sketches."

"Forgive me, Miss Conway, if I ask a question which may seem like impertinent intrusion; but I have heard—I was told that your present circumstances were such as to oblige you to exert your

talents as a means of support. May I ask if this is true?"

"It is quite true. I have very little else to depend upon."

"I am sure you will believe that it was not mere idle curiosity which induced me to ask, but a wish to be of service to you. I know there must be difficulties in your way, and I need not say how happy I should feel, in being able to assist you."

"Thank you," replied Louisa, "but although I have some difficulties to encounter, such as must always be found on entering a new career, I have no doubt of overcoming them in time; as perseverance and strong-will have often overcome them before."

There was in her tone and manner too much of the pride of former days, to allow Edward to repeat his offer of service, and he merely said :

"I rejoice to find that you bring such good courage to the task, which so many, in your station, would shrink from with a weak feeling of degradation; as if there could be degradation in anything which enables us to preserve our independence of mind."

"I cannot claim to myself the merit of having been altogether a stranger to such a feeling," said Louisa, colouring; "but I have had time enough here for solitary reflection, to arrive at the conclusion, that no name, however noble, can be disgraced by honest toil. And I trust, that none of the house of Conway would blush to see me, their last descendant, in this humble abode, earning my bread by my own exertions, rather than eating it in bitter dependence. My solitude has

already been so far serviceable to me, that it has enabled me to see clearly many truths which, in the midst of the world, are obscured by its opinions and prejudices."

"That is a real and great good," said Edward, mildly; "but the mind is apt, whilst it throws off the coil the world winds round it, to wrap itself more closely in another, scarcely less opposed to its healthy action, when there is nothing to divert or correct its views and meditations. I hope you are in no danger of this kind, from growing too fond of solitude, Miss Conway? Although apparently a harmless, perhaps a useful predilection, it is not always one which speeds us on in the great work of existence."

"When the world is desolate without, and the heart more desolate still within," said Louisa, in a low voice, "what better refuge is there than solitude? What better solace than the toil which prevents the mind from brooding on its misery?"

"Believe me, there *is* a better refuge than these for the lonely and sick-hearted. There is a solace they cannot give in looking away from ourselves, abroad upon the wide world, and forcing the heart to see that it is *not* desolate. You know that I have needed such a philosophy as this," added he, with emotion. "Let me lead you to it, as a fellow-sufferer. Much as I honour your exertions, I cannot conceal from you that they may be made in a spirit which will destroy their best fruit—that of inward peace. If we suffer, let us not bear our suffering in pride and bitterness. We do not suffer alone. How many in this wide earth—how many around us, even at our very door, are bearing a burden as heavy, perhaps heavier, than ours!"

In sympathy for the sorrow of our brethren, is the surest balm for our own.

"If we feel ourselves deserted, let us seek refuge in the thought of that Infinite Love under whose healing wings all that mourn are gathered together in holy brotherhood. If our own disappointments, our own mournful experience, seem to have darkened for us all that was bright and beautiful, let us look beyond the clouds of our own lot, and see how much there is still of truth and goodness, and nobleness of character to vindicate human nature, and prove that God's world is beautiful still, and that, if looked upon in love and faith, even amidst its darkest scenes, there are traces of Divine harmony, in which the travailing and desolate heart may find rest and consolation."

"But am I not cut off from such knowledge of what exists around me? Perhaps, you blame me, as many others did, for having adopted this mode of life; but, as it is, I am utterly alone."

"I know I have had advantages, as a man with a professional career, which you have not," said Edward, avoiding a direct answer to her half question, concerning the decided step she had taken. "My professional duties precluded the indulgence of any wish I might have had for seclusion. I was forced, I think fortunately, to go on bearing my part in the world—that little circle, at least, which is my world of action—and I have been practically taught the wholesome lesson that, only in enlarging, not in contracting the circle of our affections, can any true solace be found for a wounded spirit. I have an ill grace in speaking thus of myself to you, my dear Miss Conway; but, as you are denied the means of such practical instruction, I cannot

but hope that the experience of a fellow-sufferer may not be altogether useless to you. Let your meditations be often on the *present* condition of man as well as his future destiny, and when gloomy feelings will arise, strive to think of yourself not as a lonely mourner, but as one of a large, a holy band, together passing through the waters of affliction, to come forth purified and regenerated. Look upon your path as never solitary in its darkness or its hopes, but as one trodden by many who should be linked together in mutual love and mutual sympathy, and on which some flowers are ever springing beneath the kindly influences of Heaven, if we would but stoop our proud heads to mark and gather them."

Louisa was too much moved to answer him at once. She knew that this was no barren theory of consolation; that he who urged it so earnestly had himself needed, to the utmost, its healing efficacy. She could see in his pale countenance, in his dimmed glance, that his own struggle had been a fierce one, and that it was not yet over; and she felt already the truth of his words, as she looked on him, her fellow-mourner, and reflected that, though apart, they trod the same toilsome path.

"I hope," resumed Edward, remarking her silence, "that you do not consider my words an impertinent obtrusion, or think that, under cover of my profession, I have taken upon myself to preach, when I rather need being preached to."

"No, indeed!" exclaimed Louisa. "I was only silent because I could not speak. Much of what you have said has occurred to me in my better moods, but I have turned too little to such thoughts for consolation. You have done me much good,

Mr. Annesley; more than any one could believe who has not lived as I have done for the last two months."

Mr. Annesley was satisfied, and he turned the conversation to other subjects. He tried to persuade Louisa to take up her abode for a time, at least, with Mrs. Allen. But this she steadily refused. She felt that she had not strength to encounter all the recollections that would assail her at Ethelwode, and that there would be more bitterness in dwelling within sight of her former home, now dismantled and abandoned, than in all the loneliness of her present lot.

All that Edward could obtain was a promise that she would write regularly to Mrs. Allen, and not again leave her friends in ignorance and anxiety concerning her fate. Louisa felt her heart sink within her, as he rose to take his leave. It would be long before she again saw a familiar face, or heard a friendly voice; and the tears rose to her eyes in spite of herself, as she returned the warm pressure of his hand at parting. Often and often afterwards, in the hour when her loneliness pressed most heavily upon her, did she remember that visit, and his earnest words, and feel comforted.

As time passed on, that inward comfort was more and more needed, for no cheering ray from without came to lighten her toilsome path. After being pressed to finish her picture by a certain day, and having deprived herself of rest and exercise, not to lose a moment of daylight, the amateur, who had ordered it, changed his mind, and she received encouraging words and idle praise for sole payment. Fresh mental torment was now also added to her burden.

"The painfulest feeling," says a writer of our day, "is that of your own feebleness.....to be weak, is the true misery. And yet of your strength there is and can be no clear feeling, save by what you have done. Between vague wavering capability and fixed indubitable performance, what a difference! A certain inarticulate self-consciousness dwells dimly in us, which only our works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments." Such was the train of thought which now painfully engrossed Louisa; in the proud consciousness of power she had rushed fearlessly upon a new career; and now as, one after another, her exertions failed and ended in disappointment, the feeling of her weakness, the withering fear that she had utterly deceived herself, crept over her, chilling her hopes, and numbing her faculties, and she despised herself.

"How valueless must I be," she would exclaim, "if these hands cannot earn for me even the miserable pittance I require! Talents! intellect! where are they, or of what avail? Was it for such a result as this that my father toiled? Oh! it is well that the grave conceals from him his child's utter feebleness and insignificance, the poverty of that mind which he so laboured to store. Now there are none to mourn my low estate, to see how sorrow has ground down the intellect which was once fondly supposed to be none of the meanest. Now there are none to pity me—none to soothe," she added, in a softer tone; "even Ellen and Reginald can forsake me: she, perhaps, has sorrows of her own; but he is prosperous, happy, and I am forgotten. Oh, my father! it is

well indeed that the grave hides these things from thy sight."

Such thoughts as these had weighed long upon Louisa's mind, and almost crushed her energy, when she suddenly roused herself from them, with a resolution to make a new effort to rise superior to the obstacles which surrounded her. Painting had failed; she would now write; from her obscure corner she would speak to the world, and in its sympathy, perhaps in its admiration, find the companionship she needed. The many thoughts and feelings which in her loneliness crowded too fast upon her, would thus find a vent; and while she peopled her solitude by her own creative power, her meditations would lose the character of mere idle contemplation, and bear a rich and precious fruit. Thus inspired and invigorated, did she enter upon her new labour, which for a time, from its all-engrossing interest, brought to her that solace she had so earnestly sought.

CHAPTER XI.

"That tone, those looks so changed.
————— the withering blight
That sin and sorrow leave, where'er they light,
All struck upon his heart, sudden and cold
As death itself."

Lalla Rookh.

The autumn and winter passed away, and spring returned once more to awaken the earth from its icy rest, making it burst forth into new life and beauty, and at the same time to recall to London the gay multitudes, who, as if afraid of the contrary between their artificial existence and the pure loveliness of nature in this bright season of her youth, seem to flee for refuge from her into the crowded dwellings and busy thoroughfares from whence she is excluded.

Lord and Lady Caldwell were amongst those whom business or pleasure recalled to London at this season; and, after an eight months' absence from England, Ellen found herself once more in its great metropolis. As she entered it, her thoughts recurred to the time, only a year since, when she had entered it for the first time. She could scarcely believe it was only a year; long and weary ages seemed to have rolled over her head since then.

She, the wretched, the hopeless, the hardened,

had only numbered nineteen years of existence. The withering blight had fallen upon her ere even the bud of her young life had expanded into bloom—at an age when to most women sorrow is yet but a name. She remembered that a year ago she had thought she knew affliction; and that affliction seemed light as joy itself when compared to the cold, crushing weight which lay at her heart now. To her that lapse of time had brought neither change nor relief; it had passed like a long feverish dream of mingled splendour and misery, and had left no trace behind, save that the pleasures in whose excitement she sought forgetfulness had daily become less capable of affording it. Custom had deadened her to many pangs, but it had also taken the zest from many enjoyments.

The splendour of her position, the luxury that surrounded her, the very homage paid to her beauty, had palled upon her senses; even flattery had no power to soothe the “dull, cold ear” of satiety. Her mind, formerly accustomed by Edward’s and Louisa’s companionship to better things, now that its feverish anguish had sunk into the apathy of hopelessness, sickened at the emptiness of all the brilliant baubles which decked her existence. The conviction that all was “vanity and vexation of spirit,” had settled darkly and heavily upon her soul, excluding all light and hope. Weary and sick at heart, yet ever restless, she dragged on her miserable existence, an object of envy to those who only saw its outward trappings of splendour, and conceived not that the soul might starve in a golden prison-house; and herself envying the very menials of her household, whose enforced labour saved them from her “strenuous idlene”

bought for them at night the blessed forgetfulness of sleep.

"Did you ever see any one so dreadfully altered as Lady Caldwell?" said Mrs. Carew to Lady Frances Montague, as they met in the crush-room of the Opera, the first night that Ellen appeared in public since her arrival in town. "She really is scarcely handsome now!"

"Not handsome!" exclaimed a young guardsman, who was making his *débüt* in the fashionable world under Mrs. Carew's auspices. "She was the most beautiful woman in the house to-night; at least," added he, warned by the cloud which came over his patroness's still pretty features, "*one* of the most beautiful!"

"Not to be compared, however, to what she was when she came out," said Lady Frances. "But it is no wonder, if all one hears is true. I am told that she has been going on very strangely abroad, dashing through thick and thin; but perhaps this is all mere *on-dits*. I should really be grieved to think it true, for I have known her from a child, and she used to be a favourite of mine, though I must confess she was always rather flighty. I must inquire and know more about her before I renew my acquaintance with her."

"I have no doubt it is all true," said Mrs. Carew. "But what on earth can it signify to you or me whether it is or not. If she had had ten *cicisbeos* at Naples instead of one, and flirted twenty times as much with Sir Frederick Granville at Paris, I do not see why we should trouble ourselves about it, so long as Lord Caldwell allows her to be mistress of the best house in London."

"Ah! that may be very well for you to say; but,

as a mother, you know, I am bound to be more particular for the sake of my dear girls. I should blame myself severely for exposing them to any contamination."

"Thank heavens! I have no grown-up daughters with morals to be taken care of," said Mrs. Carew, laughing; "I hope my own are proof against any contamination likely to ensue from contact with Lady Caldwell. At all events, I shall brave the danger, for I hear she is to give the most splendid balls of the season, and I shall certainly not allow myself to be kept away from them by any scruples of conscience."

"Balls!—really, I had not heard that she meant to receive at all. Then I suppose every body will go. To be sure, as to merely going to a ball at a person's house, I do not see that it can much signify. There is no necessity to know her intimately because one goes to her parties. Besides, after all, I dare say there is a great deal of exaggeration in what one hears. At all events, I shall leave a card upon her to-morrow, that can do no harm; and if she has really been only flighty, poor thing! an old friend should not judge her too harshly."

"There is Lady Caldwell coming towards us now, mamma," whispered Fanny.

"And Lady Cardale, with Lady Anne leaning on her arm, is talking to her, I see; so, of course, there can be nothing wrong about her," and Lady Frances hurried forward to meet Ellen.

"My dear Lady Caldwell, I am so delighted to see you again! How charmingly you are looking! How is Lord Caldwell? I did not see him with you to-night. I hope he is quite well?"

Ellen had not seen the Montagues since her wed-

ding-day; and this sudden meeting brought back such a tide of recollections, that she had some difficulty in retaining her usual self-possession. She answered Lady Frances's greeting rather hurriedly, and tried to pass on. But Lady Frances moved on too.

"It is so long since I have seen you," she continued, "I have a thousand things to say. There have been sad changes at Oaklands, you know, since you left England. My poor dear brother gone!—and Mr. Allen, too, is dead now. . . ."

"Mr. Allen!—then where is. . . ." Ellen stopped short—she had not power to utter the remainder of her question.

"Mrs. Allen and Mr. Annesley left Ethelwode after his death. Lord Ethelwode offered Mr. Annesley the living—so Lady Ethelwode told me—but he refused it, and obtained a curacy in London instead."

"And where is Louisa Conway now?" said Ellen, turning to another subject with apparent indifference. "Is she still with you?"

"Ah, that was a most distressing business! You have no idea how much I suffered at the time. She behaved very ill both to Mr. St. John and to us. But I cannot tell you about it now. I will call upon you to-morrow morning, and we will have a comfortable talk over old times."

"But cannot you tell me if Louisa is in town, and what is her direction?"

"I believe she is in town somewhere, but I really do not exactly know where. She behaved so strangely, that although, for her dear mother's sake, I would have done any thing for her, I was obliged to give

her up. Minna, my dear, do you recollect Louisa's direction?"

Minna was at this moment deeply engaged in conversation with Mr. St. John; and the sudden change of his countenance, as Louisa's name was mentioned, warned her that it might be imprudent to apprise him of where she was to be found, although she perfectly remembered the direction; therefore she denied all knowledge of it. And Fanny really had forgotten it.

"Well, I have got it somewhere at home, I know," said Lady Frances, "and I will look for it, and bring it with me when I call to-morrow, if you are really anxious to have it."

Lady Caldwell was very anxious, and begged her so earnestly not to fail in coming the next morning, that Lady Frances rejoiced in the certainty that she should have the *entrée* of Caldwell House for the rest of the season. Her carriage was announced at the moment, and she sailed away with Fanny, followed by Minna, leaning on Mr. St. John's arm.

"It will be no fault of Minna Montague's, if Arthur St. John does not soon forget his *grande passion* for Miss Conway," said Mrs. Carew, when they were out of hearing; "I never saw such a dead set made at any man in my life. However, she has my best wishes. She may not make a particularly good wife, but she will be an admirable *maitresse de bonne maison*, and it is high time he should leave off playing the despairing lover, and letting his fine property go to rack and ruin, out of spite to Miss Conway."

"He did not look much like a despairing lover when I saw him, this winter, in Paris," said Lady Caldwell; "and his property seemed to me more

in danger from gambling than from any tenderer passion. I fancy men in general, and Mr. St. John, in particular, are not likely to lose any thing, in these days, for love."

"You, of all others, have surely least right to say so," whispered Sir Frederick Granville, who had been abroad a constant follower in Lady Caldwell's train, and who was suspected of a deeper feeling towards her than mere admiration.

"I assure you, I weighed their love in the balance long ago, and found it lighter than vanity itself—a charming plaything, but no wear in it whatever. Now, will you be so kind, Sir Frederick," continued she, anticipating the remonstrance which his look already eloquently expressed, "as to see if I have any chance of getting my carriage to-night?"

Sir Frederick bit his lip and left her to obey her commands. The wished-for announcement met his ear before he reached the bottom of the stairs, and he ran back to offer his arm to the disdainful beauty, who had blighted his existence with a hopeless passion, and now laughed to scorn the love she had kindled.

It so happened that that night Edward Annesley had been detained late beside the deathbed of one of his parishioners, and his way home led him past the Opera House, just as the performance was over.

The crowd round the doors, and the crush of carriages, prevented his passing on; and he was obliged to wait, much against his inclination, as he knew that Mrs. Allen would be anxiously expecting him at home, from whence he was seldom absent at so late an hour. In his impatience, he

was on the point of trying to force his way through the dense mass of carriages, when his steps were suddenly arrested by the shout which arose from the crowd—

“ Lady Caldwell’s carriage stops the way ! ”

The name rang in Edward’s ears. It was Ellen’s new name which he thus heard for the first time. She was then in England—in that house. His brain felt dizzy, and he clung to the lamp-post, near which he was standing, to save himself from reeling. The next moment he threw himself into the crowd, and pushed his way through, with desperate strength, to the foremost place.

He had just reached it, and stood breathless in the deep shadow of one of the pillars, when Lady Caldwell, leaning on Sir Frederick Granville’s arm, appeared at the door. Some confusion amongst the carriages had forced hers to back a little, and she was obliged to wait two or three minutes before it could drive up again. The strong glare of the gas-light fell upon her face and figure as she stood beneath the lamp, and Edward had full time to mark the change which had taken place in both, since that morning when he had pressed her to his bosom, and bid her find comfort in the hope that they should soon meet again to part no more. Changed she seemed, indeed !

Exquisitely beautiful as she still was, the bright dewy freshness which had been the characteristic of her beauty and its greatest charm was utterly gone ; the chiselled features had lost the roundness of youth ; her form was much wasted, and the peach-like bloom had faded from her cheek ; her large blue eyes, as she lifted for a moment the heavy eyelashes, flashed forth brilliantly as ever ;

but there was a restlessness in their brilliancy—and the deep, unfathomable expression which had so often thrilled every nerve of Edward's being was there no longer. Her lip was slightly curled, as if in habitual scorn; but it was in her voice, as she spoke a few gay words to her companion, that the change was most startling—that voice which had once been as the “very sound of happy thoughts”—that voice whose lightest utterance had once power to stir his inmost soul!

The whole miserable history of her existence, since they parted, seemed revealed to him in its altered tones. Edward groaned audibly, but the sound was lost in the conflicting noises of the crowd. Ellen passed on to her carriage, unconscious who was near her—unconscious whose eyes were fixed upon her—as if her presence were light. The door was closed, the carriage drove off, and Edward staggered back against the pillar, insensible to the pressure of the crowd and the clamour which prevailed around him.

When he recovered his consciousness of outward objects, the crowd was gone, and the street was silent and solitary. That momentary apparition seemed to him like a dream; but, oh, how unutterably mournful! Slowly, heavily he turned away from the spot where *she* had stood, and directed his steps towards his own home. Mrs. Allen was anxiously waiting for him, as he had foreseen, and his haggard countenance did not quiet her alarm. But he could not, at that moment, explain the cause of his agitation: he hastily wished her good-night; and, with her usual consideration, she did not attempt to question him.

Long after the good old lady had forgotten her

anxiety in sleep, even till the grey dawn broke in the east, Edward watched by his open window, struggling with the passionate feelings which the event of that night had once more awakened in his heart; and praying, in agonized earnestness, for her, the thought of whose misery was harder to bear than all the woe which she had brought upon him.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Friend of my youth, we meet again,
Both changed in outward guise ;
But the love we bore each other then
Still lives in our tearful eyes.
Those who were wont our hearts to cheer,
Have left us on earth alone.
But we'll love each other the better still,
For the sake of those who are gone,
Old Friend.”

MRS. NORTON.

“ I'll play the tyrant——
Till, by afflictions and continued cares,
I've worn thee to a homely household drudge.”

OTWAY.

There was little fear of Lady Frances forgetting her promise to call on Lady Caldwell, and, accordingly, the next morning, as early as was consistent with the rules of fashionable etiquette, her carriage drove to the door of Lord Caldwell's stately mansion. As she and her daughter were ushered through the long and magnificent suite of apartments into the luxurious boudoir where Ellen spent her mornings, she felt perfectly satisfied that the mistress of such a house was not to be lightly judged, like a person of no account; and that, whatever might be her faults and follies, they were covered by too splendid a mantle for a prudent person to discover them.

Lady Caldwell received them graciously, for she

was anxious to learn from them all she could about Louisa. The hope of seeing again her earliest friend—the only being, as she thought, who had ever loved her, had roused her from her usual listless indifference; to have any thing to hope for was a blessed change, and there was something of her old gaiety of look and manner in her reception of the Montagues.

“Have you brought me Louisa’s direction?” was her first question, as soon as the preliminary civilities were over.

“Yes, here it is; the one, at least, which she gave me when first she left us—she may have changed since then, however—for, after her extraordinary behaviour, of course, there was an end to all intercourse between us. It was a great trial to me, but I could not countenance such conduct.”

“What conduct?—What do you mean? Louisa never can have behaved ill. She, who would have made any sacrifice rather than do what she thought wrong.”

“That is the very thing,” said Minna, laughing; “unfortunately, what she thought wrong, every body else thought right. She thought it wrong to marry Mr. St. John, after encouraging him to fall in love with her; so she preferred being a beggar, to remaining mistress of Oaklands; then, when she was a beggar, she thought it wrong to allow any one to help mamma to support her, so she quarrelled with her bread and butter altogether, and rode off on her high horse—and that was always high enough, you know—with the determination of supporting herself; a determination which, I should think, she must long ago have repented.”

"I told her she would," said Lady Frances. "I warned her of her folly; but she was a great deal too obstinate to take my advice, and she went her own way."

"And you have never seen her since—never even inquired whether she had starved or not!" exclaimed Ellen, indignantly.

"Starved, oh, dear, no!" said Lady Frances, with a qualm of conscience at the neglect she had never blamed herself for, till Lady Caldwell spoke of it so warmly. "Of course, there was no fear of her starving. And, I assure you, I did all I could to prevent her going—and nobody but myself can tell what I have suffered, to think of my dear sister's only child turning out so ill—disgracing her family as she has done."

"Disgrace!—Louisa Conway disgrace her family! . . ."

"Perhaps disgrace may be too strong a word; I feel so strongly on this subject, that I naturally express myself so. But when a young woman flies in the face of all the world, chooses to separate herself from all her family, and forget her birth and station in life, so far as to descend to work for her bread, you will allow that so near a relation as I am has a right to feel hurt—that I cannot but feel keenly the degradation she has entailed upon herself."

"Louisa Conway must be much changed, if she can be degraded by any situation," said Ellen, warmly, her better feelings rousing in defence of her friend. "At all events, I shall go and find her out to-day, if I possibly can, and ascertain for myself how the matter stands."

"Ah, my dear Lady Caldwell, I assure you, you

had better not attempt it, you will be very much shocked. I have often wished to go and see her myself; but she lives, as you see, in some dreadful place in the suburbs, where I could not think of taking my girls. Besides, I was afraid of its being known in the world; for *their* sakes, you know, I should not like to acknowledge as a relation a person living in that low manner."

Lady Caldwell's lip curled in scorn, and she coldly replied, that, as she had no such considerations to deter her, and did not dread any contamination from the vulgarity of Louisa's abode, she should certainly persist in her intention of seeking out her friend, without delay. Lady Frances saw that she had failed in making the desired impression on her auditor, and she was the more annoyed, as she dreaded the different interpretation Louisa might give of her aunt's conduct. But Ellen cut short all her anxious attempts at explanation and exculpation, and passed on to another subject. Finding herself baffled, she shortened the visit as much as possible, and soon after rose to go away. They were leaving the room, when Minna turned suddenly round—

"By the way," said she, fixing her eyes on Ellen's face, "I had almost forgotten to tell you, that your old lover, Mr. Annesley, is now settled in town, and has got ——chapel. He is *the* fashionable preacher now; and is wonderfully improved, I assure you. I am glad I remembered it in time, as, perhaps you will like to go and hear him."

"Thank you—good bye," said Ellen, stooping, as she spoke, over a stand of exotics, and plucking, carelessly, two or three of the rare and beautiful blossoms.

Minna was disappointed; and as Lady Frances was already on the staircase, she could not wait to see Ellen's countenance when she raised her head again.

As soon as the carriage had driven from the door, Lady Caldwell rang the bell, and ordered her own; and, as she passed through the hall to get into it, stopped to tell the porter herself, to remember, henceforward, that she was never at home to Lady Frances or the Miss Montagues.

Never had any drive seemed so long to Ellen as that from Berkeley Square to the obscure and distant quarter to which she had been directed. Now that the hope of seeing Louisa seemed so near being realised, her eagerness knew no bounds. In her impatience, she fancied she could have walked there quicker than the rapid pace at which the spirited horses were drawing her carriage. Yet at times a feeling almost of dread came over her at the thoughts of the meeting she was now hastening to. When at length she reached the place, her heart beat so thick and fast that it was with difficulty she could tell the footman the name he was to inquire for. The door was not immediately opened, and Ellen had leisure to contemplate the mean-looking house. The tears dimmed her eyes as she thought that Louisa—the high-born, high-bred Louisa, nursed in wealth and luxury—should be reduced to such a home as that. At length, a slatternly maid-servant answered the repeated double-knocks of the impatient footman, who felt himself degraded by standing at such a door.

"Miss Conway?" said she, with a look of total ignorance, in answer to his peremptory inquiry. "There is no such person lives here."

"But ask her," said Lady Caldwell, when the footman reported this answer, "whether she does not know any one of that name living in the neighbourhood—whether such a person did not formerly lodge here."

The girl could not remember ever having heard the name. She was a stranger there, but she would ask her mistress; perhaps she might know.

Mrs. Brown, the landlady, was at her dinner, and came up stairs in no complacent mood at having been disturbed. At the sight of the coronetted carriage and splendid liveries, however, she quickly smoothed her ruffled countenance into a smile, and, although it was raining, obeyed without demur Ellen's summons to come and speak to her at the carriage door.

She perfectly remembered having a lodger of the name of Miss Conway, but she had left her house some months ago, being unable to pay so high a rent.

"She was in very poor circumstances, I fancy, my lady, but she was too proud to say any thing about it; and kept a servant, though she was obliged to work for her bread; and many's the time I believe they had not bread to eat."

"Good heavens! is this possible?" said Ellen, the tears rolling down her cheeks in spite of herself. "And where is she now? Don't you know what has become of her?"

"Why, no, my lady; I had the direction once, I believe; she gave it me to send some things which she left behind. Somewhere in the Strand, I think it was. If your ladyship will please to wait a minute, I'll see if I can find it."

Ellen did not care how long she waited; and

away trotted Mrs. Brown, wondering who the lodger could have been that so grand a lady cared so much about. Fortunately she had not lost the direction, and she brought Lady Caldwell the note about the forgotten things, in which Louisa had given it. It was to some lane turning down from the Strand, and thither Ellen instantly proceeded.

During the slow drive through the crowded streets of the city, Ellen read over and over Louisa's short note to Mrs. Brown. The sight of that familiar handwriting moved her deeply. Louisa seemed present to her as she gazed upon it. The writing was free and clear as ever; there was no tremulousness, no sign of weakened nerves, in the well-formed and flowing letters. Ellen fancied she could trace, even in those insignificant words, that affliction had left Louisa's mind unshaken.

She was roused from her reverie by the carriage once more stopping, for the coachman to inquire where — Lane was. A passer by gave the necessary directions, but said, at the same time, that the carriage could not go down the lane; it was too narrow, and there was no room to turn at the end.

This intelligence was reported to Lady Caldwell.

"I will get out and walk there," said she. The footman let down the steps, wondering what strange freak could make her ladyship come to such a place as that; and he followed her with some disgust as she walked at a rapid pace down the narrow pavement. No. 3 was that given in Louisa's note, and Ellen looked anxiously for it on either side.

"Where is No. 3?" asked she of an old woman who was whirling a mop at one of the doors, and who stopped in her employment to gaze wonder-

ingly on the fine lady and her powdered footman, who were evidently very unusual sights in this part of the world.

"No. 3! La, ma'am, there are several number threes in this neighbourhood. This is No. 12, you see, but there is a No. 3 a few doors further down."

Ellen hurried on, and at length discerned the desired number, half effaced on the bespattered door-post of one of the meanest-looking houses in the street.

"Surely this cannot be it," thought she, as the indignant footman rang the bell with a violent jerk; "Louisa could not live in such a place as this."

Her uncertainty on this point was soon at an end. It was old Sarah herself who opened the door, and she started back in astonishment at the unexpected sight of a fashionably dressed lady and a liveried footman.

"Old Sarah! then Louisa *is* here. Where is she? Do you not know me?" exclaimed Ellen, before the old woman had had time to recover her surprise.

"Lord bless me! is it you, Miss Percival? Only think of my not knowing you at once; but I am growing rather blind. To be sure, miss—my lady, I mean—Miss Conway is here, and happy she will be, poor dear! to see you again. This way, ma'am, if you please; it's a poor place, you see, to what Miss Conway was used to, and none of her friends could ever have thought in former days of her coming to this."

Ellen silently followed the old woman up the dark, close-smelling staircase. A thousand conflicting feelings were working within, and choked

her utterance. At length they reached the narrow landing-place, and old Sarah opened a door to the left.

"Here's a friend at last come to see you, my dear," said she.

But Ellen had darted in before her, and, as Louisa rose in astonishment from the desk at which she was sitting, she sprang towards her, and, throwing her arms round her neck, convulsively sobbed out her name.

"Ellen!" exclaimed Louisa.

Old Sarah turned away to wipe her eyes with the corner of her apron, and then quietly left the room.

Long and close was that embrace of the two friends, who each felt, in finding the other once more, that, save that one, she was friendless; and afterwards, when they were seated together on the narrow sofa, it was many minutes before either could speak. Ellen, especially, was moved beyond control. It was so long since she had leant on a bosom that she could trust; so long since she had heard a voice of heartfelt affection, that it seemed now as if all the pent-up misery of those long, weary months were forcing its way into outward expression.

She hid her face on Louisa's shoulder, and wept convulsively; and Louisa checked her own tears to quiet and comfort her, and kissed again and again her burning brow, and soothed her with gentle and cheering words; so that any one who had come in then, would have thought rather that Ellen was the lonely, destitute orphan, and her comforter, the rich, and admired, and courted peeress, who was apparently raised by the world's favour, and

the gifts of fortune, high above the touch of sorrow. At length the violence of her emotion exhausted itself, and she could once more look up to Louisa's face with a smile; not the smile of other days, as Louisa painfully felt, but, though inexpressibly sad, it was one of returning peace.

"And now tell me," said Louisa, "how long you have been in England, and how you managed to find me out."

Ellen gave an account of the Montagues' visit, of her morning's drive, and the manifold difficulties she had encountered. She ended by saying—

"I was determined to find you, even if I inquired at every door in London."

"Dearest Ellen! the world has not changed you yet, I see."

A strange expression passed over Ellen's face.

"Do not let us talk of that; I could not change in my affection for you, unless I had found you false, like others. But now it is my turn to ask questions. Tell me, how is it possible that you should have been reduced to such poverty as this?"

"Circumstances have indeed rather changed with me since we met last," said Louisa, with a sad smile, as her eye glanced round the small, meanly furnished room, and rested at last on her own deep mourning, now looking rusty from constant wear, though it was evident no small pains were taken to preserve an appearance of neatness.

"But how could it come to this?" asked Ellen again, her eyes filling with tears, as she followed Louisa's glance, and then looked up to her pale and somewhat worn countenance.

Louisa briefly told her eventful history, since

her father's death: Her voice faltered when she spoke of him, but grew firmer as she went on to talk of her struggles—her exertions; and how, in spite of them, she had, day by day, seen her means diminishing, till she had been reduced to her present state.

The tears flowed again down Ellen's cheeks, as she listened to this tale of suffering, and lonely striving against poverty, and patience and faith unconquerable.

"But I am rising again in the world now," continued Louisa, more cheerfully; "I have at last a prospect of steady earnings from my painting and writing, and you are within reach again, and I have found other old friends of late."

"What friends?"

Louisa was embarrassed for a moment, and wished she had not spoken so hastily, but she was obliged to answer.

"Mr. Annesley and Mrs. Allen are settled in town now, and are very kind to me."

Ellen turned very pale. Her heart stood still at the thoughts that she might have met *him* there.

"Do you see them often?" said she, at last, speaking with some difficulty.

"Yes, as often as I can make time, for you know my time is not my own now, as it used to be—it belongs to the publisher and printseller, and buys daily bread for me and old Sarah. It is wonderful how one learns the value of time, when it becomes money."

"But why did you never write to me? why work and suffer as you have done, when you knew that I had the means to help you? I cannot bear

to think that I have been throwing away every day on worthless trifles sums that would have saved you from all this misery."

"You forget that I did not know where to write to you; and, do not be angry, dear Ellen, but I would not have taken Lord Caldwell's money when I refused that of my own relations. Now that the worst is over, and I am no longer afraid of really starving, I am rather glad than otherwise that I have had the trial. It is a satisfaction to know what one can do and bear; and it has done me good in many ways, and little harm, except making me feel rather older and less light-hearted than in former days."

Ellen looked on her friend with reverential admiration.

"Oh, Louisa! how I envy you!" exclaimed she, earnestly.

"You envy me, Ellen! how the world would marvel and laugh if it heard you; you, the rich, and noble, and admired, envying me, a dweller in a garret, working for daily bread!"

"The world! the world always laughs at whatever it cannot understand. It sees only the surface; if that is bright, it cannot conceive that there should be misery beneath."

Louisa looked earnestly at her friend's countenance, and she now, for the first time, perceived the change which had been wrought there.

"Ellen," said she, at length, hesitatingly, "perhaps it is wrong to ask such a question, but I fear you are not happy."

"Happy!" echoed Ellen, bitterly, "I have forgotten the meaning of the word."

For a moment she was tempted to throw herself

on Louisa's bosom, and pour out there all the secret woe which had been gnawing silently at her heart for months; but pride, and fear of Louisa's unbending principle, restrained her, and she went on in a half-careless, half-bitter tone; "Oh, I am happy enough, according to the world's estimate; I have money, and therefore plenty of friends, and I lead the gayest of all possible lives; that is happiness, according to the creed of *my* world, you know."

Louisa sighed, but she felt she could not press her inquiry further without indiscretion. She had almost forgotten, in the first moments of their conversation, the change in Ellen's situation since they had last met; she now felt that that change placed a barrier between them; that Ellen belonged to another, and there could no longer exist between them the unlimited confidence of other days; she felt that the secrets of Ellen's married life ought not to be revealed even to her best friend. Ellen had avoided all mention of Lord Caldwell, and she dared not ask any thing about him. There was an awkward silence for a few minutes; Ellen was the first who broke it, and she spoke in an embarrassed manner.

"How I wish I could offer you a home in my house, dearest Louisa! I wished to do so long ago, but you know a wife is not always mistress of her actions, and Lord Caldwell thought our way of living would not suit you now."

"Lord Caldwell was perfectly right. I could not afford to live with you, dear Ellen; and even for the pleasure of being with you, I would not now sacrifice my hardly-earned independence. I love it too dearly, as one always loves the work

of one's own hands; and I am so used now to this way of life, that idleness would be strange and uncomfortable to me."

"But though I cannot give, and you would not accept a home with me, let me at least provide you with a more comfortable one than this; now, do not shake your head, dear Louisa; surely it is no sacrifice of independence to accept so slight a service from so old a friend, a sister, I might almost say. Do let me feel for once that money has some power to confer happiness. I ask it for my sake, not yours. I shall feel every luxury I enjoy as a bitter reproach, so long as I know you to be in such a place as this, without the common comforts of life."

"My dear Ellen, I shall be seriously affronted if you slander my dwelling in this manner. I assure you, I am arrived at thinking it quite a spacious and luxurious abode; it is my kingdom, wherein I reign absolute; but, seriously, I do not refuse your kindness from pride; if I were as poor as I have been, I would as freely accept as you freely offer, but I have now sufficient for my own and my old Sarah's wants, and a prospect of daily increasing income, so that I hope very soon I shall be able to receive you in a home which even you will allow to be comfortable. I cannot, therefore, let you spend your money upon me; if ever I want it, be assured I will come to you without false pride or shame."

This was all that Ellen could obtain, and Louisa changed the subject, and could not be brought back to it.

The afternoon had imperceptibly glided away, and Ellen, remembering what Louisa had said, of

time being money to her now, reluctantly rose to depart. She longed to press Louisa to come home with her, but she did not dare run the risk of Lord Caldwell's displeasure. Though she was careless of it for herself, she would not expose her friend to the chances of an insulting reception.

"And when shall I see you again?" asked Louisa, her eyes involuntarily filling with tears, as she received her parting kiss.

"Soon, very soon; I shall not lose sight of you again, now I have found you; I am too happy to feel that I have still one true friend in the world."

The friends embraced once more, and Ellen left the house, not, however, without having found means to slip a bank-note into old Sarah's hands for the wants of the little household, with strict injunctions to keep the gift a secret from her mistress.

The tall footman, who had fallen asleep in the miserable kitchen, after having exhausted his brain in every possible and impossible conjecture as to the reasons of this extraordinary visit, gladly started up to follow his lady back to the spot where her brilliant equipage was awaiting her.

Ellen had thrown herself back in her seat, and was reflecting, half with joy, half with sorrow, on her meeting with Louisa, when the carriage suddenly stopped; and, on looking out to discover the cause of the delay, she saw Lord Caldwell riding up to the door. To her astonishment he dismounted, gave his horse to the groom, and jumped into the carriage. There was an expression on his dark brow which Ellen knew well how to interpret; and all the softer feelings which her meeting with Louisa had awakened, hardened again into her

usual callous bitterness, to encounter and defy the storm which she foresaw was at hand. She resolved to meet it at once, instead of waiting passively till it broke over her head; and, turning to her husband, she asked, in a sarcastic tone, to what she was indebted for the unexpected and unusual pleasure of his society.

"It will be an edifying novelty to the world," said she, with a laugh, "to see us exhibiting ourselves together in this loving fashion."

"It would be well for both of us, Lady Caldwell, if the world had never seen you exhibit yourself in any less creditable way than a *tête-à-tête* with your husband," replied his Lordship. "As to the reason of this—I doubt not unwelcome intrusion—I shall answer your question by another. What secret and reputable expedition can have taken you to such a place as I saw you issuing from just now, and detained you there during the two hours that your carriage has been standing at the entrance of that lane?"

"I was not aware that you took the trouble to be a spy upon my actions," retorted Ellen; "but, since that is the case, it would be useless my giving you information which you have, doubtless, already acquired by those *honourable* means."

"Do not think to baffle me by your contemptuous sneers," said Lord Caldwell, with constrained rage. "Although *you* seem to have forgotten it, *I* still remember that I am your husband; and, as my wife, I consider you accountable to me for your actions. I demand, as a right, to know what is the reason of this clandestine expedition."

"And, supposing I were to deny your right, and refuse to comply with your demand?"

"Beware how you dare to trifle with me. You are not so secure of impunity as you seem to think yourself. The law gives me power, which you will find it dangerous to laugh at."

"Pray, do not make us both more ridiculous than we are already by such violent gesticulations. I shall not trouble you to exert your power, as I do not care that you or the whole world should know where I have been. This clandestine visit—so clandestine, that by your own showing my carriage was waiting for me during the whole time, in the most public thoroughfare in London — was to Louisa Conway. I hope you are satisfied with the mouse which your mountain has brought forth."

"Louisa Conway! In such a place as that! Do you take me for a fool, to be gulled by such a gross imposture?"

Ellen indignantly tossed to him Louisa's note to Mrs. Brown.

"You may satisfy yourself, if you please," said she, haughtily, "whether I speak truth or not, since you think I would condescend to deceive you; if that is not enough, we can return to the house. I have no doubt Miss Conway will be highly flattered by the visit of so distinguished a personage."

Lord Caldwell bit his lip. He could not doubt the evidence of the note; and he felt that his unfounded and insulting suspicions, and the violence he had given way to, had placed him in the wrong. This consciousness rather increased than diminished his irritation, and he resolved to punish his wife for having dared to be innocent when he chose to believe her guilty.

"Supposing this to be true," said he, "Miss

Conway cannot, under such circumstances, be a fit person for you to visit. It is not likely that a girl so highly connected should be reduced to the condition this note indicates, unless by such improper conduct, on her own part, as would oblige her relations to cast her off."

"Improper! you do not know Louisa Conway, or you could not speak of her thus," exclaimed Ellen, roused out of her covering of sarcastic coldness into honest warmth for her friend. "It is through the very meanness and low-mindedness of her relations that she has been reduced to these circumstances. They could not understand such a nature as hers. Her conduct has been most pure, most noble: she has toiled, and suffered, and struggled, as none but she could have done. Oh! would to God I could feel myself worthy to be her friend!"

"I am glad to see you grown so marvellously humble in your estimate of your own merits," said Lord Caldwell, sneeringly; for he always grew cool as soon as he had stung his wife into warmth. "But the question is, not whether you think yourself worthy or unworthy to associate with this paragon of virtue: I have no doubt she has every perfection under the sun, since you say it, who are so qualified to judge; but the world is hard of belief in the perfections of a woman, whom her own relations have been obliged to discountenance: and I do not choose my wife to be known as the friend of such a person. I must, therefore, beg that you will cease all intercourse with her for the future."

"No; I cannot; I will not give her up; I will not cast her off, like the cowardly Montagues, because she is poor and friendless. She is my oldest,

only friend, and I will not forsake her in her hour of need."

"This is very heroic, certainly; it is only a pity that you, who seem so strongly impressed with the duties of friendship, should pass over so completely those of a wife. You seem to forget that you took a vow of *obedience* to me when you became mine."

Forget it! as well might the slave forget the brand which the red-hot iron had seared into his flesh. Ellen would have sacrificed the best part of her existence to be *able* to forget that vow.

"If *you* have forgotten it, however," continued he, "*I* have not forgotten the power it gives me; and I insist upon your obeying my injunctions with regard to this person."

"And you — did not *you* too make me a vow? a vow to love and cherish? have *you* kept it so strictly? have *you* never forgotten it? what love have you given to me? Have you not rather heaped upon me coldness, scorn, insult, tyranny, and remembered nothing of the tie that bound us to each other, but the power it gave you to do all this with impunity? Why should I be more scrupulous than you? why should I fulfil every tittle of a vow which you have utterly broken?"

"Simply because I have power to *enforce* your fulfilling it; and I warn you that you must prepare yourself to obey, or to leave my house for ever."

A few months sooner, Ellen would, probably, have eagerly embraced the latter alternative; but she had been for some time aware that she was likely to become a mother, and the thought of her unborn child restrained her.

"I do not question your power," said she, bit-

terly. "I well know that might is ever right in this world. But why should you exert it in this instance? Why, without reason, without motive, from pure tyranny, deprive me of the society of my dearest friend, only because she is my friend, and has none other but me?"

"I told you once before, that I hate female friends. I have no wish to have my actions discussed—my character canvassed between you and Miss Conway. You seem so well able to take your own part, that you cannot want any one to assist you against me. Besides, dangers sometimes lurk under the most innocent appearances. I do not doubt but all this extreme anxiety on your part, to continue your visits to your friend, arises solely from regard to her; but *I* know that Mr. Annesley is also in town, perhaps in that neighbourhood, and, of course, a constant visiter at Miss Conway's; and, notwithstanding your taunting accusation of indifference, I cherish your welfare too tenderly to allow you to incur the risk of such dangerous meetings."

During this speech, Ellen's face had first flushed crimson with indignation, then turned deadly pale. When her husband ceased, she made an effort to speak; but her naturally delicate frame, weakened by her situation, and worn out by the incessant agitation of the last few hours, was unable to endure the spirit's struggle, and, with a moan of agony, she sank back senseless on her seat.

Lord Caldwell was half angry, half alarmed. He called to the coachman to drive on with all speed, and then, raising up his wife, he strove to recall her to animation, by rubbing her | speaking to her in gentle tones. Perha

moment, as she lay in his arms cold and inanimate, and he looked on that young and beautiful face, so pale, so woe-worn, so death-like—some touch of remorse, some feeling of compassion, may have moved his callous nature. He bent anxiously over her; and when the carriage stopped at the door of his house, he himself lifted her out, and would allow no one to assist him in bearing her up stairs.

He laid her on her bed, still cold and lifeless, and would not leave the room till the efforts of her attendants, and of the physician, who had been immediately sent for, at length recalled her to life and consciousness. Alas! to Ellen, consciousness was but the return of misery, and gladly would she have sunk back into that deep torpor which, for a moment, had brought forgetfulness. As she heard Doctor L—— telling Lord Caldwell, in the room adjoining hers, that her life was safe, and that no further danger, except that of exhaustion, was to be apprehended from her attack, her heart thrilled at the thought that death had been so near her.

Lord Caldwell was moved likewise by the physician's words. He now learnt, for the first time, Ellen's situation, and he shuddered to think that he might have destroyed, by his own act, the dearest hope of his life, that of obtaining an heir to the name and fortune he had made for himself. He inwardly determined to be more guarded for the future, at least, so long as violence might be attended with such danger, and even, if necessary, to yield to Ellen's wishes with regard to Louisa.

But his indulgence was not put to such a trial. When Ellen recovered her consciousness, and with

it the recollection of all that had passed, she resolved not to expose herself a second time to the insult of suspicion, and she herself felt that it was better to avoid the risk of meeting Edward Annesley. She wrote, therefore, to Louisa, telling her that their intercourse was forbidden, and that, for the present, at least, they could meet no more.

And thus were the two friends, after that brief reunion, parted again as widely as if sea and land had still divided them from each other.

CHAPTER XIII.

"The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind: but it has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary and cannot impart it; till I am known and do not want it."

Dr. JOHNSON: *Letter to Lord Chesterfield.*

Louisa had truly told Ellen that her worldly circumstances were beginning to improve, but, before we explain the reason of the change, we must glance back over the history of those long months of solitude and labour, which had elapsed since she had entered the arduous career of writing for bread.

That time had been to her a period of rugged, but salutary discipline. Her proud self-dependence had been humbled by a long course of disappointment and suffering, which, homely in its details, common—alas! too common, in its incidents—had been not the less heavy to endure. Week after week, she had toiled on in vain; one effort after another, begun in hopeful energy, had proved fruitless. The pages over which she had spent days of arduous study, and long wakeful nights of meditation, were returned to her unread by the wealthy publisher to whom she addressed herself, though she offered them at a price barely sufficient to pay the stationer for the materials she

had used, and leave a little surplus for her scanty wants.

What mattered it that the rich ore of thought and genius was discernible in every page—that she poured on every subject she handled the light of a clear and powerful intellect—that by her hand the ponderous weapon of close and logical argument, and the lighter arms of wit and satire, were wielded with equal ease? The publisher had no time to discover the talent of a nameless author, and mere merit was a weak claim on public favour.

Louisa carried back her rejected work to her cheerless abode, where cold and hunger were now her constant guests. As time passed on, poverty weighed more and more heavily upon Louisa. The lodgings, which had at first seemed to her so small and mean, she soon found too expensive for her to keep, and she was obliged, as we have seen, to remove to a still more humble abode. One by one she was forced to give up the comforts of life, until reduced to the bare necessities, and sometimes even wanting these—lonely, friendless, almost hopeless, she drank to the very dregs the cup she had so lightly accepted.

Not the least of the sufferings she had to endure was the utter solitude in which she lived, and which was more entire and more painful in the heart of the populous city than it would have been in the remotest village of the empire. It is only women who can know such solitude as hers, which her conventional position converted into a dreary prison-house. No ties of business connected her with her fellow-creatures—no community of interests, such as a man, however abject his poverty, might rejoice in.

as he discusses public news in the resorts of his fellow-men. She had been truly *alone* in thought and spirit; for Sarah's affection, strong as it was, could not teach her to sympathize with all that Louisa suffered at that time.

She could mourn over her frequent disappointments, but she could know nothing of their worst sting—the heart-burnings they kindled, the conflict of an aspiring mind struggling in vain against its invisible but galling chains—the wild longing of a spirit, full of energy and consciousness of power, to find a scope for its exertion, ere it could sink within its cage and be still. Such had been to Louisa the trial of those months; but, if we turn from this to the result worked out, there is cheering in the midst of the seemingly dark and dreary prospect. We have pitied her till now; but, when we see that, in the midst of disappointment, she preserved a hopeful spirit—that, through poverty and humiliation, she nourished herself with lofty thoughts—that, desolate in heart, and yearning for human sympathy and affection, she had yet daily gained ground in her contest with her rebellious feelings, and, with positive want before her, was enabled, in the strength of a lofty faith, never to regret the brilliant destiny which might have been hers, our pity for the lonely girl is lost in veneration for the earnest and faithful spirit which had so nobly converted the uses of adversity to its own purification. Neither was hers, as Edward had feared for her at first, the bitter triumph of the stoic, but the long and painful struggle of the Christian to assert the supremacy of his spiritual nature; and daily, even as her outward lot became more dreary, did the Christian's reward, internal peace, become more fully her blessed portion.

At length, just at the moment when her prospects seemed most hopeless, a favourable change took place in the aspect of her affairs. One morning, that she was sitting by her fireless hearth, anxiously pondering on her situation, old Sarah brought her a newspaper, which the landlady's husband had brought home with him, and which she had begged of him for her young mistress, hoping that it might serve to divert her a little while from her anxious thoughts. Louisa took it almost mechanically, for her own concerns were too painfully engrossing to leave her much interest in public affairs; but the first words which caught her eye were the name of Reginald Talbot. Her interest was instantly roused, and she turned eagerly to the paragraph. It was a letter, by an anonymous writer, containing a most virulent attack upon Mr. Talbot, who had lately, by the retirement of Sir Robert Fullerton, succeeded to the principal post in the mission to ——. The writer not only condemned the course of policy he had pursued abroad, but ascribed many of his public measures to the meanest private motives, reflecting upon his character both as a man of honour and a servant of the government, with all the injustice of political rancour, and denying all merit to the valuable commercial treaty he had lately been the means of bringing to a conclusion, and which, according to him, was drawn up with a view only to the private interests of certain individuals, whom Mr. Talbot had, no doubt, good reasons for wishing to serve.

It was with the utmost indignation that Louisa read this slander of her early friend. Strangely, unkindly as Reginald had behaved towards herself, she had perfect confidence in his honour and in-

tegrity, which the calumny of the whole world could not have shaken; and she heartily joined in the wish with which the writer concluded, that the whole business might shortly be brought before parliament, that she might hear Reginald's character defended as publicly as it had been attacked. When, however, some time before parliament met, the author of the letter, for some purposes of political agitation, republished his libellous accusations in the form of a pamphlet, enlarging upon all his former statements, and attacking still more virulently Reginald's public and private character, Louisa could keep silent no longer, and she resolved to take up his defence herself. She had studied the question throughout with the greatest care and interest, anxiously following the proceedings in which Reginald bore so important a part, and she was therefore fully competent to disprove the accusations against him.

She lost no time in applying herself to her task, and, with the obnoxious pamphlet before her, followed the author step by step, refuting his arguments, answering his accusations, and showing an intimate knowledge of the subject, which cast the surest ridicule on the vain attempt which had been made to misrepresent and falsify it. Having thus ably and calmly replied to her adversary, she ended with a warm and eloquent vindication of the character which had been so basely aspersed, and of the policy whose enlarged views and noble aims she set forth in forcible and glowing language.

Within a few days after the appearance of the attack, this vindication was sent to the publisher, who lost no time in giving it to the world; where the discussion excited, at that moment, the greatest

interest. The calumniator was silenced; and innumerable were the conjectures made concerning the anonymous writer of the eloquent "vindication."

Louisa had no *arrière pensée* when she thus took up the cudgels for the absent. Her long and anxious wish to enter, as an author, the lists for public favour, to be allowed, at last, a chance of trying her strength, was forgotten, when, on the impulse of warm and generous feelings, she sat down to answer Reginald's accuser; but now that, after so many vain attempts to gain a hearing, her new production was suddenly launched into the world, and received, at once, with the admiration it deserved, she became sensible how much this first step might be made to aid her in her future endeavours, and the loud praises, whose echo reached her even in her seclusion, thrilled to her heart with an unknown delight, reanimating her confidence in her own powers, giving her hopes of future success, and creating a new link, as it were, to bind her in the solitude of her lowly dwelling, to the busy stirring world without, where her voice had made itself heard, and had commanded respect.

This pleasant change came to her at the moment when she most needed cheering; when, wearied with her fruitless efforts to earn a livelihood by intellectual exertion, she had almost made up her mind to seek, at last, a situation as governess, or to take in needlework; which employment, odious as it was to a person of her habits and pursuits, seemed preferable to the former, which necessarily involved a separation from old Sarah—a separation now more bitter to think of than ever. Gladly,

now, did she banish these melancholy projects, and once more set hopefully to work with the tools she best loved to handle; and she was in the midst of correcting and revising some things she had written in the course of the winter, preparatory to trying their success with the publisher of her pamphlet, when Edward Annesley came to town.

The pride which had made Louisa so reserved with him before, was now subdued; and when he inquired anxiously, though with an evident fear of seeming to trespass upon her confidence, into her past success and future prospects, she frankly told him the history of her weary struggles and almost hopeless endeavours; and, at length, confessed to him the secret of the pamphlet, and the hopes she drew from its success. Edward had read the "vindication," and some suspicion of the truth had crossed his mind, which he was now delighted to have confirmed. He warmly encouraged Louisa's hopes, urged her to lose no time, whilst the remembrance of her late success was fresh in the public mind; and entreated her once more to allow him to assist her, and to entrust him with her future negotiations with the publisher, saying, that he had little fear about disposing of any writings by the author of a pamphlet which had been so universally admired, and that he trusted shortly to be the bearer of joyful news.

He proved right in his anticipations; Louisa's services were gladly secured for a review of high literary character, of which the publisher in question was the editor. A work of some importance was shortly after sent to her to review, and she thus saw before her, as she had told Ellen, a steady hope of employment, which afforded her an intense

pleasure none can appreciate who have not known the fearful weight of forced inaction upon a stirring and energetic mind. And now, when after a day spent in hopeful labour, she frequently enjoyed an hour's conversation with Edward, or a quiet evening with her kind old friend Mrs. Allen, a new life seemed to have opened to her, so bright and cheering was the contrast with the weary scenes of past weeks and months.

Nor were Mrs. Allen and her grandson the only friends who welcomed Louisa as warmly now as in the days of her prosperity. Lady Catherine St. John had gone abroad shortly after Louisa left Lady Frances Montague, and she did not return to England till the spring; but she had not been many days in town, before she made an anxious search for her young friend, and met her with all the warm kindness of former days. She considerably forbore making any remarks upon Louisa's evident poverty, and never reminded her of the many arguments by which she had tried to deter her from the course which had proved one of such bitter trial; and, having heard, with pleasure, the account of her present plans and expectations, she refrained from intruding any offers of pecuniary service, which she knew Louisa too well to hope she would accept. Seldom, however, did a day pass after their first meeting, but some little attention, some trifling present, of fruit and flowers, some entreaty that, as a favour to her, Louisa would leave her occupations for an hour, to drive with her, proved her feelings towards her, and her respect for the conduct, which, though adopted contrary to her advice, and, as she thought, on mistaken grounds, had been so nobly maintained.

It was not long before Lady Catherine St. John's renewed intercourse with Louisa became known to Lady Frances Montague. She found herself obliged to speak of her niece with a certain degree of consideration in that lady's presence, and even began to think it necessary to express her regret at having been hitherto prevented seeing her since her return to town, though her first anxiety had been to seek her dear niece, who, however singular in her opinions, and unconciliating in her manners, was bound to her by ties, not of blood merely, but of affection, which made her take the deepest interest in her fate. London certainly required a perpetual sacrifice of feeling, but nothing should prevent her seeking Louisa on the morrow.

And accordingly, the day after this exhibition of sentiment, Lady Frances, having sent to inquire Louisa's address from Lady Catherine's servants, departed on her visit to her niece.

"It would never do, you know, my dear," she said to Minna, "for *me* to appear to neglect her, when such people as Lady Caldwell and Lady Catherine St. John choose to countenance her. It would be dreadful to me that my poor dear sister's child should think me more backward than strangers."

At the moment when these kind visitors were making their way down the narrow street in which Louisa lived, the latter was busily intent on correcting some proof-sheets which had been sent to her from the publisher, and which Edward Annesley had promised to come for that afternoon. So intent was she on her occupation, that she heard neither the footman's knock nor the voices and

steps on the stairs ; great, therefore, was her amazement when the door opened, and her aunt and cousins walked into the room. She had hardly time to recover herself, before Fanny sprang forward.

"I am so glad to see you again, dearest Louisa !" she exclaimed, throwing her arms round her neck ; "you do not know how often I have wished to come to you," she added, in a lower voice.

Louisa was greatly moved by the warmth of her cousin's greeting, and returned it affectionately ; then, turning to Lady Frances and Minna—

"This visit is so very unexpected," she said, "that you must excuse my being almost too much bewildered to receive you properly."

"You must be aware, my dear Louisa, how much, notwithstanding your strange conduct last year, this long separation has cost my feelings," said Lady Frances, in her most pathetic tone. "We have been in the country almost all the winter, or I should have come long before this."

"Mr. Annesley told me last autumn, that you were going out of town," replied Louisa, taking no notice of the first part of her speech ; "but I assure you, I hardly expected the honour of a visit on your return."

"Oh ! I have been coming every day ; for I was sure before now you must be sorry for the angry feelings with which you left my house, and which hurt me so much ; but really in London one's time is so taken up—as you found, you know, in former days—natural inclinations and feelings must constantly be silenced there. I am sure, you must be much happier in this quiet little room."

Bitter words rose to Louisa's lips, but she repressed them.

"I am truly thankful to be able to say that I *have* found happiness in this little room," said she, gravely; "if the lessons I have learnt here have been rude, they have, I trust, been thoroughly laid to heart, and not in vain."

Minna gazed at her cousin with amazement as she expressed feelings so different from those which she had imagined such an ordeal must create.

"Happiness!" she involuntarily exclaimed, as she looked round the narrow, half-furnished, and dimly lighted apartment. The tears stood in Fanny's eyes.

"You must have suffered dreadfully, dear Louisa," said she. "I had no idea you were in such a wretched place as this."

"No, indeed," said Lady Frances; "I should have been miserable if I had known it; but I must say, that, independently of your own comfort, it shows little consideration for your family, to have come to such a place. The feelings of others should really be consulted as well as our own in such cases."

"Certainly," said Louisa, with a bitter smile; "and had I known that my movements were watched with such affectionate anxiety, it would no doubt have had great weight in determining my choice of an abode; and, not to hurt the feelings which were suffering so much on my account, I might have preferred starving in a more elegant apartment, to eating my daily bread in this obscure corner."

"Starving! good heavens!" exclaimed the three ladies in a breath.

"Pray do not talk of such dreadful things,"

continued Lady Frances, in a state of great agitation; "all I have suffered on your account for the last eight months has not contributed to strengthen my nerves, I assure you."

"So this is the life you chose in your love of independence. Well, our tastes are different," said Minna, trying to force a laugh, though, in truth, unaccountably abashed before her cousin, whose manner, to her surprise, had lost none of the quiet dignity which characterised it in former days. "But now, seriously, when do you mean to come out of your hole? Even the dormouse creeps out when the winter is over."

"But I am not here like the dormouse," said Louisa; "this has been my cage, and a narrow one if you will, but no idle sleeping-place."

"Oh, no! I know that; Lady Catherine told us you were busy writing, and would come out a famous authoress some day."

"I must say, my dear Louisa," said Lady Frances, in her gentlest voice, "that I thought it rather unkind that you should not have imparted your success to *me*. I, who have always been so proud of your talents, and predicted such great things of them, must feel this in a peculiar manner, you know."

"Undoubtedly," replied Louisa, with irrepressible sarcasm.

"But I am not affronted, my dear, so never mind," continued Lady Frances; "only I thought it fair to *you* to tell Lady Catherine you had written to me about it."

"I am sorry for that," said Louisa, coldly, "as I expressly told Lady Catherine, yesterday, that I had not mentioned any of my plans to you."

Lady Frances was somewhat confused for a few minutes, and Louisa's straightforward manner seemed more odious to her than ever; but she soon recovered, and, having resolved on being kind and patronizing, she said, she hoped she should be able to ask Louisa to dinner soon; she must speak to "dear Montague" about it, and perhaps she might get some pleasant people to meet her. But Louisa explained that she wished not to put her aunt to any inconvenience; some day, when it was fine enough to walk so far, she would go and call on her, but she had no wish to enter again into society.

"But Lady Catherine St. John told me," said Lady Frances, "that she was to call for you next Monday, to go and spend the day with her at Claremont; I should think that, if you can go out with her, you might come to your poor mother's sister."

"Lady Catherine most kindly remembered my love for the country and for flowers," replied Louisa, again taking no notice of the more pathetic part of her aunt's speech, "and she has persuaded me to spend the day with her in her beautiful garden, on the assurance that such an excursion would do me good after my long confinement in this place."

"I am sure it will," exclaimed Fanny; "you are looking shockingly pale and thin, and must want change of air."

"You will not meet Mr. St. John, at Claremont," whispered Minna; "he is engaged to go with us to the Duke of Dainsworth's *déjeuner*, on that day."

Louisa said nothing, but she fixed her proud eye upon Minna, and words could not have expressed more plainly than that look the contempt she felt

for one who could thus coldly seek to probe a wound she knew had rankled long, though she could not know how far it was then healed. Minna quailed beneath her glance, and reaped humiliation instead of the triumph she had anticipated. The conversation continued some time longer, but all Lady Frances's attempts to patronize, and Minna's to mortify Louisa, were vain: at length, much to her relief, they prepared to depart, Lady Frances reiterating, before she went, her request that, for her sake at least, Louisa would lodge herself better.

"It might be of serious injury to us, my dear, if it were generally known how you are sunk in the world. If dear Montague had been aware what sort of place you were in, I do not think he would have allowed the girls to come; though, of course, nothing could keep *me* from you; but I must consider them, you know."

"Never mind, I shall come again soon, if I can," said Fanny, giving her cousin a parting kiss before she followed her mother and sister down stairs.

When Louisa closed the door and returned to her seat after this pleasant interview, it was with a renewal of bitter feelings, such as she had not known for months. In vain she chid herself for yielding to them; her mind was too much disturbed even to allow her to resume her occupation, and she was still chafing in silence over the recollection of what had passed, when a slight tap at the door announced another visitor, and Edward Annesley walked in.

"Did I not see Lady Frances Montague's carriage waiting here, a little while ago?" he asked. "I was coming here then, but I thought she was with you, and I would not disturb a family party."

"They have been here, indeed," replied Louisa; "though what procured me the honour of their visit I do not quite understand. However, it would have been no intrusion to break in upon such a family party," she added, with an accent of bitterness, which it pained Edward to hear.

"I fear, from what you say, that I have been too hasty in rejoicing that Lady Frances had at last awakened to a proper sense of what was owing to you, as her relation, if for nothing else; and that this visit was to pave the way for a reconciliation."

"I rather think the real cause of this new *empressement*, if it were worth seeking into," replied Louisa, still unable to speak with her usual calmness, "is that they have heard of Lady Catherine St. John's kindness to me, and dread the censure of the world, should they be known to neglect me utterly. Some rumour of my late success has also reached them, and perhaps they expect me to start up suddenly and rush into the world as a fashionable lion or lioness, and thought it as well to soothe the royal beast while yet in her den!" Louisa tried to laugh, but a tear started to her eyes, which she turned away to conceal, feeling angry with herself for being so deeply moved.

"I am sorry to see that the meeting, at all events, has not been a pleasant one," said Edward, after a moment's silence; "so let us turn to a more agreeable subject. Have you finished these?" he added, taking up one of the proof-sheets which were lying on her desk.

"I should have had them ready for you, as I promised, but for this interruption; however, I have not above a quarter of an hour's work to do."

"Then, if you will allow me to wait here, I will find something to amuse myself with, while you are finishing your task."

"You are welcome to all the amusement my *chartreuse* can afford," said Louisa, with her usual calm smile, as she resumed her seat at the table. "If you open that portfolio, you will find some drawings which perhaps you have not seen; amongst them is the one which I promised to Mrs. Allen, and which I should be obliged to you if you will take to her."

Edward opened the portfolio, and soon found the drawing. It was a sketch of the old parsonage at Ethelwode, which Mrs. Allen had been very anxious to have, and which Louisa had found time, in the midst of her occupations, to copy for her kind old friend. He looked at it with mournful interest; and then with a sigh, as the view of this once happy home stirred up too many melancholy thoughts, he laid it aside, and proceeded to examine the further contents of the portfolio.

There were many beautiful sketches taken in Italy and Germany, and groupes worthy of a master's hand; but there were other things, more full of interest for him. In one section, apart from the rest, were drawings of Oaklands; outlines of the bold sea-coast, animated by the spirited sketches of boats and vessels scudding rapidly by, or tossed upon the foaming waves. There was a sketch taken the day of the memorable water-party, and near the old tower was a group, each individual of which was distinct to his eyes, and he could almost fancy he heard Ellen's musical voice, as she stood, the loveliest and gayest of them all. The next drawing he took up made him start. It was a likeness

of Ellen, slightly touched, but beautifully faithful, and sparkling with all her brilliant animation. At the bottom was written in pencil,

"Promised to Ellen, for a certain gentleman, if it proves sufficiently like when finished, and hereto we sign our names.

"L. C. and E. P."

The drawing fell from his hand. It had, then, been intended for him! The date was a few days after his engagement to Ellen; this, then, was to have been love's first and most precious gift; and now that promise, recorded in girlish playfulness, met him, only to show that, like the more solemn one that had preceded it, it had been broken and forgotten.

"This is no fit contemplation for me," he mentally ejaculated, resolutely laying the portrait aside. "I have no claim to that now." He closed the portfolio, but his thoughts would not so immediately revert from that all-engrossing topic. Ellen, in all her loveliness, such as she had been when that sketch was made, artless, tender, confiding, rose before him; and then the vision changed, and he saw her again, as she was when last he accidentally met her, and he would have given worlds to read the secret of the dark interval between, and the truth of her present condition. In his frequent interviews with Louisa, her name was never mentioned, and he had, therefore, remained ignorant, both of her attempt to renew her intercourse with her early friend, and of her husband's subsequent harshness. Severely as Louisa had felt this second separation, it was the last subject on which she wished to engage Edward's sympathy; and he could only conjecture that, if there had been any

fear of his meeting Ellen in his visits to Louisa, the latter would have warned him. He *felt* she could not be happy; the change in her appearance told that but too plainly, but beyond this, every thing was mystery and uncertainty.

All meditation upon this subject was, however, both painful and fruitless; and, turning to Louisa's little bookcase, to divert his thoughts from it, sympathy for another soon worked its never-failing result of self-forgetfulness. The worn volumes attested how frequently they had been resorted to; and as he opened several of them, and saw them full of notes and comments in her writing, he seemed to obtain a nearer insight into the history of those dreary months during which those volumes had been her only companions. The first spring of many a train of thought, which he had since seen followed up and worked out into action, then unfolded itself to him, and he turned from the contemplation of his own fate to admiration of her who was working so quietly before him, unconscious how much she occupied his thoughts; and, as he thus pondered, the narrow chamber, which had been to the frivolous and worldly Montagues a den of horrors, seemed, in his eyes, a holy temple, hallowed as the scene where a noble spirit had struggled for spiritual life or death, and had come off victorious.

At length Louisa's task was finished, and, folding up the papers, she handed them to Annesley.

"You really do so much for me, and spare me such infinite trouble and annoyance, that, I fear, you will make me quite helpless," she said; "my conscience often smites me for taking up so much of your precious time."

"Pray, set your conscience at rest, then, henceforth," replied Edward; "for I assure you that I deem my time, such as I have to spare from more arduous duties, well employed in your service."

Louisa thanked him warmly, and soon after he departed on his errand, promising to return in half an hour, to accompany her to Mrs. Allen's, where he had persuaded her to spend the evening. He had seen the evil effects of the visit of her fine relations, and he exacted this promise from her, thinking that it was desirable to prevent her dwelling upon this subject during her long solitary evening. Any thing which could help to efface the recollection of this new infusion of bitterness into her cup must, he felt, be a welcome relief, and he was successful in the means he adopted. Before Louisa returned again to her humble dwelling, the Montagues were forgotten; sneering tones and unkind words were no longer echoing around her, and the peace which had been momentarily disturbed again settled over her mind.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I have loved
And been beloved! the sunbeam of an hour,
Which gave life's hidden treasures to mine eye,
As they lay shining in their secret founts,
Went out, and left them colourless. 'Tis past,
And what remains on earth? The rainbow mist,
Through which I gazed, hath melted, and my sight
Is cleared to look on all things as they are!"

MRS. HEMANS.

The sun rose bright and clear the morning on which Louisa had engaged herself to accompany Lady Catherine St. John to Claremont, giving promise of one of those lovely days of an English summer, which are perhaps unequalled in beauty in any climate, although, alas, too rare of occurrence. The air was soft as any southern breeze, and balmy with the fragrance of the new-mown hay. The sky was pure and blue as the eyes of the fair-haired girls, pursuing their gay labour in the meadows, beneath its sunshine; only here and there a light white cloud relieved its uniformity of colour, and gave to the scene that beautiful variety of light and shade which is too often wanting in the glowing scenery of the south. Earth and sky were keeping holiday; and to Louisa, who for months had breathed no air but that of a narrow, confined street, in one of the most crowded quarters of the metropolis, a drive into the country on

such a day was real happiness. As they got beyond the prison-like confines of endless brick walls she felt a degree of exhilaration, a lightness of heart and spirits to which she had been a stranger for many long months. She was too happy for words, and she sat in silent delight beside Lady Catherine, who, perceiving her excitement, kindly allowed her to enjoy herself her own way.

They soon arrived at Claremont, and the beautiful garden, blooming in all the pride of early summer, was a fresh source of pleasure to Louisa. Every plant and shrub, just brought out of their winter's abode in the greenhouse, seemed rejoicing in sympathy with her, and dancing in the gentle breeze for very glee at being allowed to feel again the pure breath of heaven. And the gladness of childhood came once more over Louisa's heart, as she flitted from bed to bed, freely using Lady Catherine's permission to gather what flowers she liked; and only once, whilst stopping before a clump of mignonette, which had been her father's especial favourite, did a cloud pass over her mind, and a tear drop on her fragrant bouquet, as she thought of her own beautiful garden, now lying waste and desolate.

Altogether, the day was one of as unmixed enjoyment as any we are allowed to know on earth, and her kind friend's prediction that this little excursion would do her good, seemed likely to be fully verified. In the evening Lady Catherine, who was something of an invalid, retired to lie down for a short time, before they set out on their drive back to town, telling Louisa where she would find books, if she were inclined to seek amusement in-doors, after the unusual fatigue of the day. But

Louisa was in no mood for books: Nature's own fair and wondrous volume lay open before her, and she looked upon it too seldom now to spare one of those precious moments to any other. She went forth again into the garden, and, crossing the lawn, she directed her steps towards the broad terrace which overhung the river.

There was a seat beneath a wide-spreading beech at one end, and there she now took her station; the excitement of the morning had gone off, and as she marked with loving eye the calm yet restless water glancing beneath the rays of the setting sun, the grass waving in the fragrant breeze, the clear yet soft outline of every object against the glowing sky, the influence of the quiet scene stole over her heart; every rebellious or regretful thought was hushed within, and a calm and holy thankfulness filled her whole soul. Never till now had she felt so strongly that the storm was over—that her weary and shattered bark had at length found its haven of rest, and tears of deep but happy emotion unconsciously rose to her eyes.

It was at that moment that the splash of oars, and the sound of voices laughing and talking, roused her from her reverie. She looked out from her leafy screen: a boat, with a gay freight of passengers, was making its way up the river, and Louisa listened to the sounds of mirth which proceeded from the party on board, and which the breeze wafted to her, though they were still at some distance; with the mournful feeling with which the lonely ever regard the social happiness from whence they are debarred. It was a far deeper feeling, however, which, as the boat drew nearer, drove the colour from her cheek, and made

her lean forward to listen, as if her whole soul hung upon the sound. In the indistinct hum of voices she thought there was one which bore a familiar tone—a tone which made the blood rush back to her heart. She could not mistake the voice which had so long been to her as a spell—a power beyond that of music—it must be St. John's; and impelled by an irresistible desire to look on him once more, she carefully put aside the curtain of foliage which hid her from view, and placed herself so that she could see without being seen.

There, indeed, was St. John, seated in the gaily-painted barge, and Minna Montague was by his side. Mrs. Carew, Fanny, and several gentlemen were with them, but these two alone arrested Louisa's attention. There was that indescribable *something* in their manner which denotes a peculiar intimacy, acknowledged by the rest of the party. Louisa could not hear what they said, but the softened tone, the look which accompanied the half-whispered words, showed plainly that their conversation was of a very different nature from the gay talk of their companions. That look, beneath whose eloquence Louisa had so often sunk abashed, trembling with joy and fear, was now fixed on Minna, and though she could not see *her* face, she knew that it was returned. Why, as she thought of this, did so sharp a pang shoot across her heart? She sank back on her seat, pale and trembling; but the next moment a crimson blush rose to her cheek, in shame at her own weakness.

What was he now to her, that she should tremble to see him see suing for another's love? Had she not willingly renounced him, and, in the midst of all her agony, never repented of the act? And

did she expect him, did she wish him to cherish a passion which she had been so earnest in eradicating from her own heart? Poor Louisa! as she asked herself these questions, she hid her face in her hands, and in bitter humiliation she acknowledged her own weakness and selfishness. Yet she thought she could have borne it better if any other but Minna had won his love. Minna, so vain, so heartless, so selfish—how could he find happiness with such a wife! Surely, debased, tainted, as his nature was, it was yet too noble for such companionship as hers! In other hands, perhaps, he might have been redeemed from his errors; and Louisa heaved a deep sigh.

It was a short time afterwards that Lady Catherine sent to summon her back to the house; and when she came, her kind friend wondered, with painful surprise, what had so suddenly brought back that expression of inward and suppressed suffering to the countenance which had been so bright but two hours before. She refrained from asking any questions, however, and Louisa had at least the consolation of feeling that none but herself would know of the suffering and humiliation of that hour.

Leaving her to return to town, with what real or seeming tranquillity she could attain, we will follow awhile the course of the gay party in the boat, which was gliding swiftly on to its destination,

“As though it bore all peace within,
Nor left one aching heart behind!”

They soon reached the Duke of Dainsworth's villa, where they found Lady Frances awaiting them, and rather alarmed, lest the damp upon the

water should have given dear Minna a cold, or have put her hair out of curl, or unstiffened her *paille-de-riz* bonnet. As none of these misfortunes had happened, and as St. John showed as much lover-like devotion as could be expected, she allowed herself to recover her composure, and renewed a discourse on her enjoyment of country pleasures, which she had interrupted, to greet the arrival of the party in the boat.

Her complacency was seriously disturbed again, however, when she heard Minna refuse to dance the first waltz with Mr. St. John.

"My dear, how very foolish! What can you be thinking of!" she exclaimed, in a tone of alarm. "If you are engaged, surely you can get off. I will go and tell Mr. St. John it is a mistake."

"No, no, mamma! Leave it alone; I know what I am about. I am not engaged at all; but if he suspected, as perhaps he might, that I *wished* to dance with him, he must now think himself undeceived, and he will come back with double *empressement*."

"Well, my dear, do as you think best; only remember, if you had taken my advice about Sir Willoughby....."

"How could I dream that the wretch had a bride ready waiting for him in Scotland, while I was wasting my time upon him here? And now, I dare say, he thinks I am pining for him; but he will find himself mistaken. Before he and his odious wife return from Italy, they shall see in the papers, the account of Mrs. St. John's first assembly."

"Well, have it your own way, my dear," said her mother, who seldom ventured to argue with

her eldest daughter. "I only hope you will not be mistaken again."

Minna was not mistaken. St. John returned, as she had predicted, to claim her hand for another dance, and she played her cards so well, that he scarcely left her again the whole evening. His vanity, still smarting from the wounds inflicted by Louisa's repeated refusal, was soothed and propitiated by the well-timed flattery Minna knew so well how to administer, and the irritation left by the blow which his better feelings had sustained, at the same time was softened, whilst she poured the healing balm of tender sympathy into the wounds, and let him occasionally perceive how he had won the treasure of her deep and uncontrollable affections, alone excited and made uncontrollable by the sense of his wrongs!

It was Minna's policy to display every charm and feminine grace which had been wanting in Louisa's character, and to prevent all contrast between their more important qualities. Thus, whilst praising talent and information in women, she had ever a *coup de patte* ready against the female pedantry so unfortunately inseparable from them. She was all amiable weakness, all feminine humility. *She* could not venture to sustain any opinions; and in any struggle between duty and feeling, she really envied those who were strong enough, or cold enough, to follow the former. Alas! to her warm and tender nature such a course would be impossible, and she could therefore only find safety in the position which would make their dictates one and the same.

Here was a battery sufficient to overcome a better defended fortress! It has been said

women, and we fear uncontradicted by men, that to any woman who will condescend to arm herself with flattery—not in its grossest form, not always even the flattery of words, but the more dangerous, because more subtle, weapons of looks and manner, and subservience of opinion, with the double-distilled adulation of seeming reverence and sympathy—it is no hard task to lead even the proudest and ablest man at her will. If this be true, none of our readers, who are in any wise acquainted with the world, will wonder that Minna Montague saw her endeavours ere long crowned with success, and that clever, highly-gifted even as he was, St. John became the easy dupe of a woman he had formerly disliked and ridiculed, the moment her artifice entered into league with his vanity.

A short time after the *déjeûner* at the Duke of Dainsworth's, Minna, on returning from her ride, burst triumphantly into her mother's dressing-room.

"Now let Sir Willoughby and his bride come when they will, I am prepared for them!" were her first words, as she threw herself into a seat.

"What do you mean?" asked Fanny.

"That I am engaged to Mr. St. John, my blind little sister," replied Minna, with an *air de protection*.

"Is it possible!" cried Fanny.

"So he has really proposed!" said Lady Frances. "Well, my dear child, I hope you have not allowed yourself to be carried away too much by your feelings in this matter. After all I have tried to impress on your mind, as to the importance of your choice in marriage, I am sure you

would not be hasty; yet, you know, this is a trying moment for a mother's feelings." And as she spoke, a tear, a real, honest tear of maternal affection, trembled in the eye of the plausible woman of the world. "But this is quite foolish," she continued, brushing the drops away, in astonishment at her own sincere emotion; "and we have no time to lose. We must go to Maradan's the first thing to-morrow, to secure that beautiful pink satin. It is unique, and I should be *desolée* if Lady Pringle got it for that ugly daughter of hers. My dearest Minna, I could not bear your *trousseau* to be inferior to Miss Pringle's. Ah! well may it be said that a mother's cares never cease!"

A few days after, the following note was put into Louisa's hands:—

"My dearest Louisa,

"Closely bound as we are by ties, not only of relationship, but of affection, I cannot allow you to hear of my approaching marriage through the public papers, without first announcing it to you myself. In a few weeks I shall be the wife of Arthur St. John, and in his devoted affection I see the pledge of my future happiness. I know I may depend on having your warmest wishes on the occasion, my dearest friend; and I should request you to be present at the ceremony, but that I fear it might awaken some unpleasant recollections; and, whatever pleasure your presence might afford, both to myself and to Arthur, I would not purchase it at the cost of giving you a moment's pain. I will not, therefore, press the matter, and only hope that *nothing* will prevent my having the pleasure of

receiving you at Oaklands in the course of the summer. Meanwhile, believe me ever,

“My dearest Louisa,

“Your affectionate cousin,

“MINNA MONTAGUE.”

Louisa read this note through; then, crushing it, and throwing it from her, she pressed her hands tightly to her throbbing temples. She shed no tear; she uttered no sound, but sat pale and motionless as marble. Let us hope, that in that hour of silent agony the last shreds of the fatal passion, which had wound round her heart like a treacherous serpent, poisoning the whole current of her existence, were torn away for ever.

CHAPTER XV.

" Proteus. My shame and guilt confound me.
Forgive me, Valentine ; if heavy sorrow
Be a sufficient ransom for offence,
I tender it here. I do as truly suffer
As e'er I did commit.

Valentine. Then I am paid,
And once again I do receive thee honest."

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Meanwhile, Reginald Talbot was still abroad, and still in ignorance of Louisa's circumstances. His correspondence with Annesley, through whom alone he could hear of her, had become first reserved, then rare, and had finally ceased altogether ; and with it he lost all chance of discovering his fatal mistake. It had been a heavy addition to Louisa's sorrows to find herself deserted by one whom she had loved and trusted as a brother ; but she was too proud, in her poverty, to write to him again, and sue, as she deemed it, for the kindness which should have been spontaneously offered, and thus he remained in his painful delusion with regard to her fate. It was long before he could shake off the evil influence of this delusion ; long before he could recover more healthy spirits, and look abroad, once more, upon the world with a mind freed from bitterness ; but that time had come at last, and life had assumed a new aspect in his eyes.

If its sweetest blessings were denied him, if he were doomed to run his course uncheered by the love and companionship of woman — not for that need it be dark or inglorious. Ambition once more became his mistress, and yet a noble ambition. The dreams of his early and enthusiastic youth came back to him; the goal he had looked forward to before Louisa engrossed his whole heart, and became the sole idol of his worship, rose again before him in all its original brightness. "To work with the spirit and clear aims of a man," toiling earnestly in his vocation for the good of his fellow-men; to win power and fame, no longer to deserve a woman's smile, but for the noblest uses of life; and when his lonely and restless course should be ended, to leave a glorious monument of his existence in the hearts and histories of men. Such was the career he had now chalked out for himself, and in the hope which thus beamed on his cheerless life, and incited him to incessant yet healthy exertion, his soul had found rest from its conflict, a refuge from its inward sorrow.

At length, owing to his indefatigable exertions, the objects of the mission on which he had been sent were accomplished, and he returned to England a little more than a year after having left it. Within a few hours of his landing, the object of his proudest hopes seemed unexpectedly placed within his reach. A letter from Sir Robert Fulerton was awaiting his arrival at Portsmouth, giving him the intelligence that a borough in which Sir Robert's interest was paramount had just become vacant, and that if he could be in Yorkshire by a certain day, there would be little difficulty in securing his election. Reginald set out without de-

lay for Fullerton Hall, where he was warmly received by his kind friend, and made happy by the fullest assurance of success. The event justified Sir Robert's predictions.

Mr. Talbot was duly returned mebr of me the loyal borough of G——, and hastened joyfully to town to take his seat.

He had been only a few days in London, when, one morning, as he was looking over some books in a library in Bond Street, Lady Catherine St. John's carriage drove up to the door, and a lady alighted from it, and entered the shop. She was apparently in a hurry, for she did not notice the strange effect her entrance had produced on Reginald. At first he was on the point of rushing forward to meet her, but, as she took no heed of his movement, he drew back, and turned to look at her carriage. His countenance darkened as he remarked the arms on the panel and the servant's livery; and, with a gesture of impatience, he returned to the counter, still, however, anxiously watching the lady, whose position, and the veil over her face, made him feel uncertain whether he had really recognized her.

Hitherto she had remained quite unconscious of the attention she had attracted; but Reginald was now speaking to one of the shopmen, and at the sound of his voice she started, and turned round. His back was towards her at that moment; but, as he spoke again, all her doubts vanished, and she moved quickly towards him, exclaiming:—

“Reginald! Is it possible? How do you happen to be here?”

These words of joyful surprise made it evident that she had not recognised him before; but they

could not at once allay the irritation which had been gathering ever since her entrance; and he met her, not unmoved, indeed, for a cloud was on his brow, and words on his lips, which he suddenly checked, but with a manner almost repelling from its cold reserve.

The worst feelings of Reginald's nature had been aroused by her apparent neglect at first, which had awakened a long train of painful reflections, and none who had known him in other days would have believed, that it was thus that, after a separation of nearly two years, Reginald Talbot met Louisa Conway; for she it was who had come thus eagerly towards him, and who now retreated, deeply hurt and mortified.

For a moment she had forgotten every thing, save that it was Reginald Talbot who stood once more before her, her father's adopted son, the friend of her happiest years; there was no reproach on her lips, no bitterness in her heart; but a repulse to one, naturally so undemonstrative, came with double force, and at once, their last parting, his seeming ingratitude to her father, his unfeeling desertion of herself, flashed back upon her mind; and but for the icy load at her heart, which was too painful for the relief of tears, she could have wept, regardless of all around her, at finding his long unkindness thus confirmed at their first meeting. Now, when he held out his hand in tardy acknowledgment of her warm greeting, she gave him hers mechanically, but there was no warmth in the touch, and, when their eyes met, her glance was cold and proud.

"Heartless!" mentally ejaculated Reginald, forgetting, with the remarkable facility peculiar to

his sex on such occasions, that he himself had produced the change he complained of; "however altered may be our relative positions, surely she might have some word of greeting for me now."

Louisa was the first to remember that the curious gaze of strangers was upon them, and that such a meeting must attract general attention. She forced herself to speak, and asked him how long he had been in England.

"Three weeks."

"In England three weeks!" repeated Louisa, in a voice which betrayed some of her heart's bitterness.

"I have been in Yorkshire, with Sir Robert Fullerton, during that time, and only came to town two days ago."

"New friends easily supersede old ones," said Louisa, reproachfully, though attempting to speak with calmness.

Reginald looked at her, as if amazed that she should employ this tone in speaking to him, but, repressing the answer which was upon his lips, and which, if uttered, might, perhaps, have thrown some light upon his extraordinary conduct, he merely said,

"Sir Robert has been a kind friend to me for some time past, and I owe it to him that I am now in parliament."

"In parliament!" exclaimed Louisa, whilst a tide of old memories rushed back at those words, and she thought of the days when he who was now so altered was wont to discuss warmly with her the plans for his future success, which her father had been so anxious to forward. Reginald partly

read her thoughts, and as he recurred to the same period, he was softened.

"Are you staying in town?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I hope soon, the first day I can command, to have the pleasure of calling upon you, if....."

"Reginald!" cried Louisa, in a tone of mingled sorrow and indignation, as he spoke these cold, measured words; "if we were to meet thus, it had been better that we should have remained for ever apart."

These last words were scarcely audible, for she felt she could say no more, without publicly betraying her emotion. Starting from her seat, she hastily left the shop, and springing into the carriage, she was driving rapidly down the street before Reginald had recovered his surprise.

He had made an attempt to stop her, but pride arrested his steps; there were too many witnesses around them; that was no place for such a conference as theirs must be, if the past were to be recalled and talked over; but to what purpose? they never could again be more than strangers to one another.

"Of what avail would it be to reproach her, when she seems thus unconscious of all that has passed, forgetting even how heartlessly she has cast me aside. Well, so be it, she has taught me at least a useful lesson. I left England a slave, I return a free man;" and triumphing in his freedom, he returned to the counter, to try and recollect what had brought him into the shop.

He began turning over some volumes which lay before him, when his attention was arrested by the sight of his own name on the title-page of a

pamphlet; it was Louisa's "vindication" of his character; and suddenly seeming to recollect something he wished to know, he turned to the bookseller.

"Can you tell me," he said, taking up the pamphlet, "who is the author of this? You published it, I think?"

"Yes, sir; but it was sent to me anonymously, without any terms even being asked."

"Can you give me no clue? I have some interest in finding out who could so generously have taken my defence."

"Your defence, sir? You are Mr. Talbot, then?" said the publisher, looking at him, with some surprise. "I do not wonder, indeed, that you should wish to discover the friend who so ably and fully answered your calumniator, though it seems strange that you should not know him. The only clue I can give you is this;—the author is a friend of Mr. Annesley's, the lecturer at —— chapel, for every thing we have since received from the same hand has come through him."

"Mr. Annesley!" repeated Reginald, with the utmost surprise; "Mr. Annesley in London? Pray give me his address; I must find out immediately if it is the same person;" and having obtained the direction he wanted, he left the shop.

He had once or twice thought of Edward when conjecturing who his nameless defender could be, and now the publisher's information seemed to confirm his suspicions. He set off at a rapid pace, intending to go instantly to Annesley's house; but he had not proceeded far before he met Sir Robert Fullerton, who detained him some time, and he then found that it was too late to think of seeking

Edward that evening, as he must be in the House of Commons before a certain debate came on. Accordingly he postponed his visit till the next day ; and in the interest of public business, Edward, the mysterious pamphlet, and even his strange and painful meeting with Louisa, were quickly forgotten.

The next morning, however, his anxiety to see Annesley, if, indeed, it was his old friend whom he had thus accidentally heard of, returned in full force, and at an early hour he was on his way to him.

Edward was at home, and it was with heartfelt joy that the friends met. After their first greetings were over, Reginald explained what had led to his discovering him, and questioned him about the pamphlet. Edward hesitated at first whether to disclose a secret which had been entrusted to him in the strictest confidence ; but then, thinking that Louisa could have no object in concealing it from Reginald, he openly avowed the truth, and acquainted him with all the circumstances under which the pamphlet had been written.

Reginald stood confounded, and before he could recover his surprise, other and more painful feelings were stirring within him. As he now asked question upon question, and explained to Edward the delusion under which he had lived, one fact after another was related to him, till the whole history of Louisa's life since he left her—her rejection of St. John, her letter to himself, her poverty, her sorrow, her struggles, the unkindness of her relations, and the far greater pang of his desertion—were revealed to him, and he stood conscience-stricken and overwhelmed by a tumult of conflicting feelings.

He felt like one who had awakened out of a long dream, and scarcely knew whether to mourn or rejoice that the delusions of sleep were flown. One thought was full of joy, Louisa was not the wife of his long-hated rival; but this thought no longer brought the rapture, the trembling hope, which in former days it would have kindled. He had bent all the energy of his powerful mind to conquer a passion which he believed to have become criminal, and now he found that his efforts had been but too successful. Self-reproach was also too loud at that moment to allow of any brighter thought.

Never, in the days when Louisa had exerted the most entire influence over him, had he been more thoroughly wretched on her account. His proud heart was unused to the humiliating torture of self-reproach; and now that the edifice of his scornful indifference was cast down, and he saw with what vain and flimsy materials he had constructed it, he felt humbled to the dust.

He could feel clearly now, what he had but partially admitted before, that whatever might have been her conduct or her circumstances, he had no excuse for neglecting his benefactor's child; and he could not rest till he had seen her again, and obtained her forgiveness, not for the past only, but for his wanton insult the day before, when she would gladly have met him with a warm manner and kind words, and he had repelled her greeting with pride and scorn. Yet what explanation could he give her? Could he tell her of the maddening jealousy which had made him both blind and unjust—expatiate in cold terms upon the love he once bore her, now that the passion was calmed,

and he loved no longer? Would it not seem like adding insult to the neglect he had been guilty of? And with this thought another train of sad reflection was awakened.

Why had he so painfully eradicated from his breast every trace of that passion which had once seemed entwined with his very life? Why had he passed so violently from one delusion to another? Why had he been so eager in the work of self-destruction? As he mused thus, the ambitious man forgot his struggles, his hopes, his success, and mourned for the days when his heart thrilled at a woman's voice more than now at the plaudits of thousands of his fellow-men, and he had felt all the luxury of loving, surpassing even at times that of being loved.

"It is all over now," said this stoic of eight and twenty; "oh! that I could feel for her again all that I once felt. Love would plead his own cause."

While occupied with these painful reflections, Reginald was walking silently along with Edward, who had gladly offered to lead him to Louisa's lodging, at times urging him to quicken his pace, at others he almost wishing to stop, to pause, and recover some calmness, before he rushed into her presence. The time for hesitation was soon at an end; they reached the street where she lived, and Edward left him, after repeating his warm wishes for the happy termination of his conference, and making him promise to dine with him that day, as he knew Mrs. Allen had asked Louisa.

The latter was sitting alone, and, what was most unusual for her, unoccupied. She had been unable, since that painful meeting with Reginald, to fix her thoughts on any subject. She had tried

every thing in turn, but whether reading or writing, she could not banish the recollection of his altered manner or of his unkind tones; they had grieved her to the very soul. Throughout all her misery she had clung to the hope of one day seeing him again, of their strange misunderstanding being cleared up; for she refused still to believe in his wilful desertion; and ever since she had so warmly taken up his defence, her generous nature had felt more closely bound to him than before, by the benefit she herself had conferred: but now her confidence was once more wounded and flung back upon her, once more she had trusted in vain, and bitter were the thoughts which followed on this conviction.

She was thus sitting, as we have said, unoccupied, save with sad musings, when steps on the stairs, and old Sarah's voice, saying, "Walk in there, you'll find Miss Louisa, and she'll be glad to see you, I know"—startled her from her reverie. She looked up, and Reginald was before her.

"Mr. Talbot here!" she exclaimed; but she made no advance towards him.

"Louisa! I come, as a criminal, to plead for mercy!"—she looked up in surprise—"receive me not so sternly, as to make me fear I come too late."

"A different reception yesterday made you scornful," replied Louisa, in a tone of reproach, but less proudly.

"Do not recall what happened yesterday—I was mad . . . had I known then all I have learnt since, how differently should I have prized those few moments! I . . ."

"I waited to know nothing but that you were

returned, and that I rejoiced to see you," said Louisa, in the same tone.

"Can you ever forget that moment, and rejoice again?—can you give me one kind word of welcome now—one look to make my task of self-accusation less heavy?"

He held out his hand as he spoke; and, after a moment's hesitation, she gave him hers, but still looking at him with surprise; his present conduct was not less strange than that which had so pained her before.

"I knew you could not be ungenerous to the man who comes to you—not to justify himself, but to retract his errors, and implore forgiveness," said Reginald, whose countenance brightened as he held her hand. "Recall something of the feeling of old days as you listen to my confession. Louisa, I have but one excuse to offer for conduct which must have seemed unfeeling—unmanly; and even that I know is insufficient. I have lived till this day in total ignorance of all that you have suffered since we parted." Louisa started with astonishment. "I knew only that you seemed to have cast me off, and I attributed your change to a cause I abhorred. I thought you rich and prosperous—beloved and..."

"How could this be? No! Reginald," replied Louisa, sadly, "you must have wilfully blinded yourself, if you were blind; but... it is better to forget the past—it is enough that you return now with different feelings; I will never remind you that being forgotten by you added a heavy weight to my sorrow, and made my loneliness more dreary."

"Oh, Louisa!" exclaimed Reginald, deeply moved, "I have deserved much at your hands; but not this—no, not this, if you knew all. But you must believe

me—and I swear, by all that I hold most sacred—that no letter from you ever reached me. Deluded as I was, had I received one token of remembrance from you, all my proud resolutions would have vanished instantly. But I was left to hear of your father's death from the papers only, and to gather from your silence that that death had severed every tie between us."

Louisa could hardly believe that her letter had not reached its destination; but she had never mistrusted his word, and now his earnest manner destroyed all possibility of doubt: for a moment she seemed relenting, but the cloud gathered still darker on her brow before she spoke.

"And could you thus coldly think that I had renounced all our former friendship, and make no one effort to recall me? Oh, Reginald! in former days you could not have acted thus. Could you hear of the death of my father—of him who was a father also to you," she continued, with a more faltering voice, "and not even ask if he had left a parting message for you? Even had I not written—had sorrow, and the weight of cares unknown before, but then pressing heavily upon me, made me unable to write to you, could you make no allowance for such a state, but thus coldly shiver the tie which had bound us from childhood? What explanation can there be for this?"

"I can offer none—it must remain unexplained; yet trust me, Louisa—trust me, I implore you; I have not been altogether the wretch you think me. God is my witness, that I would have forsaken every thing to fly to you, had I believed you needed consolation at my hands; but I thought another was by your side; and the public papers, the only means

I had of receiving intelligence, confirmed my belief by announcing your approaching marriage."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Louisa; "little, indeed, did you know, then, how full was my cup of misery!"

Here her voice was choked, and she covered her face for a few minutes. Suddenly she seemed to understand, in part, the cause of Reginald's conduct, as she felt that St. John had ever been the bar between them; and she felt, also, that it was the thought of him, the impossibility even of alluding to him, or of exposing what she had suffered on his account, which had greatly prevented her writing a second time to Reginald.

"I have distressed you, dear Louisa," said he, drawing nearer to her. "Forgive me, I...."

"No," replied Louisa, who had now recovered her calmness; "you have awakened many painful remembrances, but your words, far from distressing me, have removed a load of uneasiness. I ask no more; I also have much....I have reproached myself severely on your account....but let us both forget, and be to each other again what we were long ago."

She held out her hand, which he pressed fervently in his own, and both were unable for a moment to speak; but that silence ratified the renewed bond of affection better than many words. Reginald was the first to break it.

"God bless you for this, Louisa! but never say again that you reproach yourself on my account. Whilst I was absent and unkind, when you had a right to impute every bad feeling to me, did you not plead my cause with the world, and silence those who would have blackened my character, add-

ing to every other tie which binds me to you, that of owing to you the fair fame your generous efforts preserved for me?"

Louisa was surprised to find him thus acquainted with her secret; and she now first heard who had undeceived him with regard to her fate, and restored to her her early friend. Reginald related what he had heard from the publisher, and all that had passed since; his long conversation with Edward Annesley, and the additional pang which the knowledge of her generous interference in his behalf had added to his remorse — and again he thanked her warmly; but she interrupted him.

"Do not praise or thank me, dear Reginald, for satisfying my own conscience. It would have been the duty of any one, possessed of the necessary information, to refute so gross a calumny; but with me it was more. I could not forget what had been, nor how dear your fair name would have been to my father, and how he would have gloried in your work."

Louisa could not proceed; she had not yet learnt to speak of her father with calmness, and now, Reginald's presence made every recollection of him more vivid. Her companion saw her agitation, and, pressing her hand, which he had retained in his, he gently strove to soothe her, and she gladly yielded to the affectionate tones which had been so long strangers to her ears.

And now, their conversation flowed on rapidly and smoothly, as each questioned the other upon the events of their long separation, and Louisa eagerly inquired into his future plans and prospects, and expressed her warm sympathy in his success. Hours passed away thus, till she remem-

bered her engagement to Mrs. Allen, and, looking at her watch, found it was almost time to think of fulfilling it. Annesley's invitation then recurred to Reginald, and they both rejoiced that they should spend this first evening of their reconciliation together.

"If you will accept my escort," said Reginald, "we will go together."

The recollection of old days again came strongly over them both, at these simple words, the familiar sound of by-gone hours, and it seemed almost strange how easily they had slipped back to the intimate intercourse of those happy days. Louisa gladly assented to his proposition, and left the room to prepare for her walk. While she had been with him, and during the excitement of their conversation, Reginald had scarcely had time to remark the meanness of the apartment, or the evident traces of poverty visible there, but now he was startled by the appearance of what her presence had left him no leisure to perceive.

A moment before, his memory had carried him back to Oaklands, and now, the startling contrast struck him to the soul. This, then, had been the abode of her, whom he had so fondly, so madly loved! The struggle with actual want, which, in the mention of her actual poverty, she had only cursorily alluded to, was now distinct before his eyes, and the tide of self-reproach again became almost overpowering; he felt that even her generous forgiveness could not reconcile him with himself, or enable him to forget the past; and as he pictured that past, with all its dreary horrors, he was quite overcome, and burying

his face in his arms, the strong man wept like a child.

He was still in the same attitude when Louisa returned. He did not hear her step, and, half-alarmed by his silence, she laid her hand on his arm, asking him if he were ill. With a sudden impulse, he seized and pressed it fervently to his lips, while she felt his tears fall fast and warm.

"Reginald! dear Reginald, what is the matter?" she asked, anxiously, moved and alarmed, as a woman always feels, at the sight of such emotion in a man.

Reginald made a strong effort to speak, and, raising his head, though he could not meet her glance, he said, in a choked voice,

"You do not know half the bitterness of this hour to me—bitterness, which not even your kindness can take away; I feel too unworthy of your generous trust, of your prompt forgiveness," he added, dropping the hand he had retained till then. "Oh Louisa, would that I could tell you—"

"I wish to hear no more," said Louisa, gently. "We agreed to forget the past; I shall think you doubt my sincerity, if you recur to it thus."

"But to see you here, you, reared in luxury, in the happiest home, to know that you have been here in loneliness and misery, when I might have smoothed your path! But promise to let me now redeem the past, let me assist you—"

"You shall assist me with brotherly counsel and cheering words. I need no further assistance; thank God, I am now able to provide for more than I want, and my labour is a pleasure."

"But this wretched place!—you must not live

here any longer, dear Louisa; as the pledge of our reconciliation, allow me to help you in this; if you cannot afford to move, you surely cannot scruple to accept such assistance from me; it shall be as a loan, if you please," he continued, seeing her about to interrupt him, "though your father's child could not well be considered a debtor to one who lived for years under his roof, and owes every thing to his care; it is the least of a brother's privileges that I claim now."

"Believe me, Reginald, when I refuse your assistance, it is, that I do not need it, indeed, I do not. As for this poor dwelling of mine, which shocks all my visitors, but has lost all its horrors to me, you need no longer distress yourself about it, for I have only a week longer to remain here; at the end of that time, I have promised to go and live with Mrs. Allen."

This arrangement, which she now proceeded to detail to Reginald, had been made a few days before. When Louisa, whose improved income allowed her to think of moving into better lodgings, had consulted her kind friends upon the subject, Mrs. Allen seized this opportunity of carrying into effect a plan she had entertained for some time, and requested, as a favour to her, that she would accept a room in her house; and when Edward added his entreaties, urging what a comfort her society would be to the old lady, and how much they should both feel her kindness in acceding to their request, Louisa had consented, only stipulating to make her own terms, that she might be relieved from all fear of being a burden to Mrs. Allen. This she was allowed to do, and as she

had told Reginald, she was to remove in a week to her new home.

All this detail was given on their way to Mrs. Allen's, and Reginald's mind being somewhat relieved by this prospect of greater comfort for Louisa, he entered his friend's house with very different feelings from those with which he had left it that morning. The evening was one of unclouded enjoyment; Mrs. Allen and Edward both rejoiced in this reknitting of old affections; and Louisa forgot her past loneliness, and Reginald his self-reproaches, under the influence of each other's society, and the sympathy of their companions. The only drawback was the necessity of Reginald's retiring early; he could not absent himself from the House, where it was possible that there would be a division on a question of some importance, and he prepared, with regret, to take leave of the little party. When he had said good night to Mrs. Allen and Edward, he came up to Louisa.

"Good night, dear Louisa, and God bless you," he added, in a lower voice, "for all you have said and done this day, for the peace to which you have restored me! While I thought myself cast off by you, there was hardness in my heart, though my spirit was bold and free; but you have given back to me the first pure feelings of my youth, and again I say, God bless you!"

Louisa was too much moved to speak. She silently returned the pressure of his hand, and looked up to him with one of those bright smiles in which her whole soul was at times revealed, and which gave more than beauty to her countenance. And thus they parted.

Louisa did not remain late with Mrs. Allen ; her heart was full, and she longed to be alone. And when once more in her narrow chamber, all the trials it had witnessed were forgotten, and she, from whom sorrow had wrung so few tears, wept long and uncontrollably in her joy.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ A kindlier passion opened on her soul
When that poor child was born. Upon its face
She looked as on a pure and spotless gift
Of unexpected promise, where a grief
Or dread was all that had been thought of,—joy
Far livelier than the bewildered traveller feels,
Amid a perilous waste, that all night long
Hath harassed him, toiling through fearful storm,
When he beholds the first pale speck serene
Of day-spring, in the gloomy east, revealed,
And greets it with thanksgiving.”

WORDSWORTH.—*The Excursion.*

It was with mingled and conflicting feelings that Ellen looked forward to the birth of her child. There were times when her heart, so long cold and dead, woke to all a woman's deep joy in the hope of becoming a mother, and her crushed affections revived again into life and freshness, and yearned with unutterable love towards that yet unborn being, the very thought of whose existence opened such a spring of new and undreamt of blessedness. But at others a darker gloom settled over her than before. Such happiness seemed too great for her; she dared not believe that it would ever be hers. She dared not yield to the hope which stirred, as a breath from heaven, the dark, cheerless depths of her soul. She was sure that her child would die, or that she herself would sink beneath that unknown and awful suffering. And, now, she

feared to die. In the long, solitary hours of reflection, which were forced upon her by the weakness which kept her a prisoner to her room, the death she had so often wished for in her despair assumed a new and fearful aspect. She shrank back in dread from the dark, unfathomable mystery of "that undiscovered bourne, from whence no traveller returns," and on which no star of faith shed its cheering light for her.

Now, too, life seemed less desolate than it used to do. It was, at least, familiar, and some gleams of hope seemed faintly breaking through its gloom. Her husband, in his passionate wish for an heir, never contemplated the possibility that her child might prove a girl, and his heart softened towards the mother of his anxiously-desired son. His manner recovered some of that gentleness and tenderness which had first made Ellen turn to him in her desolation, and she felt that there might be, if not love, at least, peace in their home. And if her child should live—such a flood of trembling, delicious happiness overflowed her heart at that thought, that its very excess made her doubt the possibility of its realisation, and sink back again into hopeless gloom.

Often did Ellen wish, at this time, for Louisa's society to cheer her solitude. Louisa would have soothed her troubled mind—would have strengthened her often-fainting spirit. She longed for a woman's sympathy in this trying hour; but amongst all her gay associates, there was not one to whom she could turn. Louisa alone could have understood her, and felt for her and with her; but, although she lived in the same town, at half an hour's distance, she could not see her. When

Louisa became an inmate of Mrs. Allen's house, she had written to acquaint Ellen with the change of her abode, and the latter felt that it had raised an additional barrier between them. She remembered Lord Caldwell's insulting insinuations, and she would not expose herself to hearing them again, by asking him to allow her intercourse with one who was an inmate of the same house with Edward Annesley. Sometimes she wondered that Louisa should still maintain such friendship and esteem for the man who had acted so unworthily towards her friend; but, then, she remembered that she had never told her the circumstances under which her engagement had been broken off, and that Edward, therefore, must seem to her rather sinned against than sinning. She would have given worlds to justify herself in Louisa's eyes; but she felt that she could not have uttered a word on this subject.

And why should she? They were happy in each other's society. They were so fitted for one another, in mind, at least, though their hearts were so different; perhaps, they would go on from friendship to love;—but there was agony in that thought, although she tried to persuade herself it was a matter of indifference to her, and she hastily turned away from it. She was glad now that Louisa was separated from her.

At length her hour came. She bore her long and dreadful suffering with a woman's bravery; but there was despair in her silent endurance. She had no hope then; she felt sure that her child would not live; and it was not till she heard its first feeble cry that she would believe her attendant's assurance of its safety. That cry seemed to restore to the mother the life she had given her

child; pain, fear, sorrow, the weary suffering of so many months, were all forgotten, as that first faint cry thrilled to her inmost heart, and told her that she was indeed a mother.

Lord Caldwell had remained in the room adjoining Ellen's during the whole time of her illness, awaiting the event in feverish anxiety. The nurse now hastened to apprise him of it, and to assure him of the safety of both mother and child.

"And it is a boy, is it not?" exclaimed he, eagerly.

"No, my lord, a girl, and the most beautiful child you ever saw—so like my lady."

Lord Caldwell started from his seat.

"Curse the brat!" he exclaimed, passionately stamping his foot on the floor; and, seizing his hat, he rushed past the astounded nurse, out of the room, slamming the door violently behind him.

"Angels defend us!" exclaimed the nurse, as soon as she recovered her breath. "What a brute! to curse his own child, and within hearing of my lady, too, and to stamp and slam the door in that manner. It's enough to kill her, poor thing,—I am sure it has put *me* all into a fluster."

The doctor at this moment appeared at the door, with an angry countenance, to inquire into the cause of this extraordinary disturbance, by which his patient might have been dangerously alarmed. The nurse explained it, with a running commentary on Lord Caldwell's conduct, by no means flattering to him, and both returned to Ellen's bedside, apprehensive of the effect it might have upon her, if she had overheard what had passed.

But Ellen was lying with the child in her arms, her eyes fixed on that little unformed, unintelli-

gent countenance, her whole soul absorbed in its contemplation. She had not heard a sound in the next room. Her attendants winked at each other, and closed the curtains again in silence.

"If my lord could see that," said the nurse, as they withdrew, "I don't think, brute as he is, that he could find in his heart to curse that poor little innocent. I've half a mind to go and fetch him."

She was saved the trouble, by Lord Caldwell himself. After the first ebullition of rage and disappointment was over, he was angry with himself for his want of self-command, and reflected, with no small irritation, that the nurse, who was garrulous, both by habit and profession, would not fail to tell of his extraordinary conduct, and comment upon it in every house she went to. He had no wish to be pointed out as a brutal husband amongst his wife's acquaintance, and still less, that Ellen should reappear in public with the additional interest thrown over her by the character of a martyred wife. He was, therefore, anxious to efface, as much as possible, the impression of his first hasty act on Ellen's attendants; and it was in a tone of deep anxiety and interest that he now inquired after his wife and child, and asked if he might not be allowed to see them.

"Certainly, my lord, certainly. I shall be glad that you should see how lovely they look," said the nurse, in a tone which implied, "I hope it will make you ashamed of yourself, you brute." "But you must walk gently, if you please, and not make any *more* noise. My lady is so excited, she must not be spoken to or disturbed."

Lord Caldwell impatiently nodded acquiescence; and, following the nurse into the room, he allowed

her to place him where he could see without being seen. For many minutes he stood gazing silently on the young mother and her infant ; and, when he moved away, the nurse thought that his countenance was changed, and that a tear stood in his eye. He stopped as he reached the door of the outer room.

"I was hasty just now," said he, in a husky voice ; "I was naturally disappointed that my child was not a son. Pray forget my ungraciousness, and be very careful of them."

He slipped a bank-note into her hand as he spoke, and left the room, whilst the nurse, inwardly ejaculating that, after all, he was a noble-hearted gentleman, returned to her station beside Ellen, who was still lying in the same position, as unconscious and heedless as her new-born infant of all that was passing around her.

With the birth of her child a change came over the spirit of Ellen's life. The heavy, unbroken gloom which had enwrapped her existence, gave way beneath the light of this new and delicious happiness ; her heart was softened and humbled by the sense of the blessing thus given, undeserved, unprayed for. The dark unbelief to which despair had driven her, and which had shut out from her all hope and consolation, gradually yielded to the gentle influences which now flowed over her heart, making that long-time barren and silent place to rejoice and bloom again. Now that she was a mother, she wished to believe in a Providence for her child. As she tremblingly acknowledged her own helplessness to watch over, and guard, and bless it, she felt the want of some higher power to look to—some Being of

"Mercy infinite,
Beyond the tenderness of human hearts,"

to whom she could confide that frail life in which her own seemed bound up.

She felt the want of prayer—for it was only in prayer that she could pour out the yearnings of her soul for that idolized being. She trembled now, as she looked back on the past, lest her sins should be visited on her child, and, in deep and lowly repentance, she bowed herself down before the God she had so long turned from in bitter scepticism, and once more, in faith and trembling love, called upon Him as her Father. There was a sanctity in the character of a mother which made her feel that purification of heart and mind were necessary to her. Her love for her child was so pure, so holy, it seemed pollution to allow any baser thought or feeling to dwell with it in her heart. In that maternal love began self-renunciation, the foundation of all religion, all virtue. Self had sunk into insignificance, in comparison with that second self, so infinitely more precious. Her own happiness, her own misery were forgotten in her hopes and fears for another. Again she looked forward beyond the narrow circle of the present, but it was to the future of her child's existence, not her own. Even as that child had lived till its birth in its mother's life, so now in its life alone did she seem to live.

In the softer mood which this new love produced, she turned with kindlier feelings towards her husband than she had done since the first days of their union. She felt now that if she had much to forgive, there was also much for which she needed to be forgiven; and her heart warmed towards the father of her child. It was these feelings which made her receive him, whenever he came into her room, with the gentleness of other days; and, at first, he

seemed touched and pleased with the change in her manner. Few men, indeed, even though their senses were blunted by custom, like Lord Caldwell's, could have resisted the witchery of Ellen's beauty, of her voice and manner, when she chose to exert it; but the sight of his little girl always seemed to irritate him by the recollection of his disappointment. His visits became shorter and rarer; and, when he did come, Ellen was perpetually hurt by the evident indifference, bordering on dislike, which he showed towards her darling.

"I thought," said she, one day, in a mortified tone, "that you were so anxious to have children. You always used to say so; and I hoped that you would love our child as much as I do."

"So I should, if it had been a boy. But I always hated girls. What is the use of a girl?"

Ellen flushed crimson, and pressed her child more closely to her bosom.

"Ah! well may he ask what is the use of a girl?" said she to herself, after her husband had left her. "Is not woman born to sorrow, as the sparks fly upward? Hadst thou been a boy, my child, thou hadst been loved and cherished. Thou wouldst have grown up to be strong, and free, and honoured; but what is woman's lot, but suffering, and humiliation, and bondage, to be borne silently and with a smiling countenance? Oh, my child!—my child! almost rather would I that the sleep, in which thou now liest so peacefully, were the sleep of death, than think that such a lot should be thine—that thou shouldst suffer even one tenth part of what thy mother has suffered."

And, yet, a sudden terror came over Ellen as she spoke of death, and she roused her infant from its

slumber, that its cry might assure her that her rash words were not realized.

The child, which Ellen had hoped would be a bond of peace between her and her husband, now became an additional cause of dissension. Lord Caldwell's indifference made Ellen cherish it the more tenderly. It became dearer to her than ever, since, like herself, it was unloved and despised by him on whose affection it had the strongest claim; and she sought to compensate for its father's neglect by the more abundant love, the more entire devotion, of its mother. Her child was all in all to her; and, with the want of judgment so often shown by women under the same circumstances, she allowed her husband to perceive that it was so. Lord Caldwell's dislike to his little girl soon grew into positive hatred, as he found that his wife neglected him for her, and he was not slow in showing his irritation by thwarting Ellen's maternal love by every device of petty tyranny.

One of his first acts was to forbid Ellen's nursing her child herself. Ellen entreated him, almost upon her knees, not to debar her from a mother's first and most blessed duty—not to take her child from her to give it to a stranger; but he was inexorable. He was tired, he said, of being always left alone on the plea that the child wanted her. He thought his claims might be considered as well as the baby's; and, since his wife was so little disposed to remember them, he must take care to enforce them himself.

"I warn you," said he, in conclusion, "that I do not intend to be made a secondary object to this brat; and, if I find that it makes you neglect every

other duty, I shall send it away altogether, to be nursed in the country."

Poor Ellen ! all her softer feelings had vanished— all her dreams of a peaceful home were destroyed ; and she bent over her child—that child which her tyrant's caprice might at any moment snatch from her, and wept once more hot and bitter tears.

It is a comfortable reflection in this world, where might too often stands for right, and where the happiness of the weak lies at the mercy of the strong, that there is no one whom the domestic tyrant can torment so effectually as himself. He may wantonly destroy the peace and comfort of the defenceless beings who depend upon him ; he may carelessly utter words that rankle for days, months, years, in the wounded and embittered heart that had built its nest in his love, and would not if it could return the shaft into his own bosom ; and he may do it with seeming impunity, for no human law can reach him. But within that bosom itself there is an avenger that tarrieth not ; and that, with stern justice, repays him twofold for every pang that he inflicts. He may laugh to scorn every law of man, but he cannot resist the law of his own high nature, indelibly written there when man was formed in the image of his Creator ; and, in the perpetual conflict between that law and the baser passions, to which he has yielded himself a slave, there is a restless torment far exceeding any which he can inflict on the victims of his tyranny.

Thus it was now with Lord Caldwell. He had remorselessly stricken Ellen in the tenderest point, and had left her to bear the blow as she might ; but the consciousness of the wrong he had committed pursued him, and would not be driven away. He

was angry with his wife, angry with himself, irritated at every thing; and it was in a state of mind even less enviable than Ellen's that he walked through his splendid apartments to the library, which rather resembled the sanctuary of an Eastern sybarite than the daily-inhabited apartment of an English gentleman. But luxury had no power to soothe the inward jarring; there was a sharp thorn in the bed of roses. He took up one book after another from the heap of new publications of every kind which lay upon the table, but threw them peevishly down again, after turning over a few pages. He got up and walked up and down the room, irritably pushing out of his way whatever impeded his direct progress. An arm-chair that he kicked from him with rather too much violence fell against a small china table, and upset it. As Lord Caldwell raised it up again with a muttered oath, his eye fell on a note which had been lying upon it, and had dropped on the floor. He instantly recognized the cramped foreign handwriting.

"Damn that woman!" he exclaimed, as he tore open the note. "What can make her write again, after the answer I sent her last time?"

The reason was plain enough. Mademoiselle Juliani, from whom the note came, was by no means satisfied with that answer. When Lord Caldwell had accomplished his object of marrying Ellen Percival, and his ally's services were no longer needful, he had found it convenient to forget her promised reward, and, although more than a year had passed since his marriage, Mademoiselle Juliani's annuity was still in abeyance, and her return to Italy apparently as distant as when she entered into that partnership of guilt. She had written

again and again to claim the payment of her treachery, but his lordship was abroad, and she was left to conclude that her letters were lost, for they remained unanswered. Since his return to England her hopes had revived. She could not leave Lady Ethelwode, who was at the castle, and a greater invalid than ever, to attack him in person; but she persecuted him so unceasingly with letters, that at last she wrung an answer from him. It was not calculated to give her much satisfaction. With a degree of highhanded assurance, that made even Mademoiselle Juliani marvel, he said that the transactions she alluded to had occurred so long ago, that he could not tax his memory to recal them, but that if she could bring forward any written acknowledgment, on his part, of the debt she mentioned, he should be happy to liquidate the sum. Lord Caldwell was well aware that no such acknowledgment could be produced, and therefore congratulated himself on having silenced his persecutor.

Mademoiselle Juliani was not, however, one to be so easily silenced. She wrote now, loudly expostulating against his duplicity and meanness, and threatening, unless he complied with her demands, to revenge herself by making public the whole affair, and exposing him to the obloquy he so thoroughly deserved. Lord Caldwell laughed in scorn as he read the threat. He knew enough of the world to feel pretty sure that the accusations of a nameless foreigner would have little weight against a man of his rank and high standing, unless they were supported by very strong proofs; and such proofs Mademoiselle could not give. She possessed the intercepted letters, it was true, but

then there was nothing in them to prove that she had intercepted them at his instigation; and the draught of the forged letter, which alone could have implicated him, he had taken care to write in a foreign hand. He was secure enough; but it was as well to put a stop to her talking, and, taking up a pen, he wrote the following lines:—

“I have received your letter, and will once more, and for the last time, answer your importunities. You are aware that I have it in my power to prove you guilty of forgery; and if I receive one more letter of impudent begging from you, I will cast from me the forbearance I have hitherto exercised, and shall make use of that power to bring you to the condign punishment of the law. You know that I am not a man to be trifled with, and, as you value your safety, do not venture to disregard this warning.”

He sealed and despatched this note without delay, and rejoiced when it was gone, in the certainty that he should not again be annoyed by Mademoiselle Juliani. But, in spite of this security, there was something in the thoughts which her letter had called up, which made the solitude of his library unpleasant to him. He hurriedly quit-
ted it, and, mounting his horse, he joined the brilliant crowd in the park. He had yet to learn that he could fly from the avenger within.

CHAPTER XVII.

"So writhes the mind Remorse hath riven,
Unfit for earth, undoom'd for Heaven;
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death!"

BYRON.

It is time that we should now transport the reader once more to Ethelwode Castle and its inmates, whom we have of late almost lost sight of.

Lord and Lady Ethelwode had returned there immediately after Ellen's marriage, and they had not left it since. His ancestral towers had become dearer than ever to the baron, now that he could look out from them on the wide expanse of hill and dale, and feel that no upstart stranger shared with him the dominion of that noble patrimony; no modern mansion insulted his time-worn battlements by the contrast of its garish splendour. And if some remorseful thought, some blush of shame, occasionally crossed his mind and damped his exultation, it was but a passing feeling, and one look at the ruins of Lord Caldwell's former habitation, one thought of his son, to whom the barony of Ethelwode would now descend undivided, as fair and rich as in the days of his forefathers, drove the cloud away, and his joy at the possession made him forget the price he had paid for it.

Lady Ethelwode, on her side, had sunk daily

more and more into apathy since her daughter's marriage, and her son's absence at school had taken from her the only objects of interest and exertion, which, slightly as she regarded them, still stirred occasionally her sluggish existence. She vegetated on, and time left no traces of its passage with her, save in her increased corpulence, and the increased disinclination to move which grew with it. On the return of Lord and Lady Caldwell to England, she had, indeed, felt a wish to see her daughter again; but, after talking for two months of going to London, she found it impossible to make up her mind to such an exertion, and an invitation to the castle was sent instead to Lord and Lady Caldwell.

The former instantly put his veto upon such a proposition, and for once Ellen agreed with her husband. She felt that she could not have borne to return to Ethelwode. All the recollections connected with it were yet too fresh in her mind, and she shrank almost with loathing from visiting again the scenes that had witnessed the early love so cruelly deceived, the happiness so fearfully blighted. Lady Ethelwode lamented that her daughter could not come to her; then comforted herself in a few hours by the reflection that such a meeting would have been dreadfully trying, and that it was well that she had escaped it. When, however, she heard of Ellen's approaching confinement, the mother's heart woke once more from its lethargy, and she actually entertained the thought of going to her daughter, to be with her in her hour of peril; a thought which, for reasons best known to herself, Mademoiselle Juliani used her utmost endeavours to encourage and ripen into action. But after several days' uneasy cogitation on the

subject, Lady Ethelwode came, much to her own relief, and to her *dame de compagnie's* disappointment, to the conclusion that such an exertion was quite unnecessary. Ellen had plenty of people about her; she should only be in the way, and she really had not health or strength to encounter such scenes.

The ill health, which had so long served Lady Ethelwode as an excuse for neglecting every duty of a wife, a mother, and a member of society, at last actually came upon her. About two months after her daughter's confinement, she was suddenly seized with a dangerous disease. She had so long been a *malade imaginaire*, that she had almost as much difficulty now in persuading herself that she was really ill, as she had had hitherto in persuading others of it; and when the rapid advance of the disease forced upon her the conviction of its reality and its serious nature, her mind, so rudely roused from its apathy, sank down awe-struck and bewildered. She, who had dawdled away her existence in petty cares, petty thoughts, petty employments; she, who had lived rather as a sluggish weed floating on the surface of some stagnant pool, than a human being gifted with faculties and affections, and travelling along the rapid stream of Time towards eternity, now stood aghast before the great and solemn reality of death.

On the third day of her illness, the danger became so imminent that an express was despatched to Ellen, to urge her to lose no time in coming to her mother, who had expressed an anxious wish to see her. This letter reached Ellen on the day fixed for a grand *fête* at Caldwell House, given in honour of some of the members of the Royal family, and she

hurried with it into her husband's room, to tell him the melancholy news it brought, and of her intention of setting off instantly for Ethelwode.

"Set off for Ethelwode! impossible!" exclaimed Lord Caldwell, as the thought of Mademoiselle Juliani flashed across his mind. "This is the day of the *fête*, you know."

"The *fête*! How can you think about *fêtes* when my mother is dying? We must put it off, of course; we could not give it whilst she is in this state."

"My dear, I see no reason to be so much alarmed about Lady Ethelwode. She is always fancying herself ill, and I dare say is no worse now than she has been these ten years past."

"Read the letter—you will not say so then. See what Lord Ethelwode says."

"Lord Ethelwode is a pompous fool, who would think it beneath his dignity when his wife is ill not to make out that her illness is more important than any body else's. As to putting off the *fête*, that is out of the question. The Duke of —— is coming, and would be displeased at being put off; and it is of great consequence to me just now not to lose his good graces."

"He could not be affronted when he heard the reason," pleaded Ellen. "Besides, you, who always think so much of the opinion of the world, what do you suppose it will say when it is known that we are giving *fêtes* whilst my mother is dying?"

"Dying! bah! my dear, no more dying than I am, depend upon it. She has been dying fifty times since I can remember her; and those people who are always at the point of death are precisely *those who live the longest*. As to the world, it

need know nothing at all about the matter. If they had not sent that confounded express, we could not have known it ourselves till to-morrow."

"They would not have sent the express if there had not been real danger," said Ellen, striving to repress the indignation burning at her heart; "but if you will not put off this *fête*, you can do the honours of it very well without me, and I will go alone."

"No, that will never do; that would be telling every body just what I do not want them to know—that Lady Ethelwode is ill. Besides, the Duke admires you, and would be by no means pleased at your absence. I cannot think of letting you go, and it is very absurd of Lord Ethelwode sending for you, as if you had nothing to do but to be at the beck and nod of his good pleasure; and you may write and tell him so."

And so saying, Lord Caldwell left the room, putting his head in again, for a moment, however, before he closed the door, to desire his wife to be dressed in good time, and to receive her loyal guests, with a smiling face.

"A smiling face! Yes—always smiles: smiles on the lips, and beneath a breaking heart!" muttered Ellen to herself, as she sat down to write her answer to Lord Ethelwode.

Egbert had been sent for from school at the same time that the express was despatched to Ellen, and he was now eagerly looking out for his sister's arrival. He had not a doubt of her coming, and his joy at the prospect of seeing her again, after eighteen months' separation, almost made him forget his mother's danger.

"When is she coming? How soon will she be

here?" he eagerly asked, as Lord Ethelwode read Ellen's letter.

"She is not coming at all," replied his father, drily.

"Not coming! Impossible! Not coming—when my mother is so ill, and sent for her! Is she ill herself?"

"No: she does not say so, at least. There is the letter—you may read it for yourself. Perhaps you may understand it—I confess I cannot; but she was always a heartless being."

"Heartless! Ellen heartless! No, that she never was!" exclaimed Egbert, indignantly.

"Well, read that letter. It may, perhaps, change your opinion," said Lord Ethelwode, as he rose and left the room.

Egbert took the letter. It contained but a few words to say, that Ellen could not come; without giving either reason or explanation, as to what prevented her; only a message to her mother, entreating her to believe that, if it had been in her power, she would have flown to her instantly, but that it was *impossible*.

Egbert threw down the letter, and laying his head on the table, burst into tears.

"Why, Mr. Egbert," said Mademoiselle Juliani, coming into the room a few minutes afterwards, "what is the matter with you? Don't cry so; her ladyship is not so very bad, perhaps. She will get better, I dare say, when Lady Caldwell comes, for she is asking for her perpetually."

"Ellen is not coming," said Egbert, making an ineffectual effort to repress his tears.

Mademoiselle Juliani uttered an exclamation of surprise and disappointment, and inquired the

believe that Ellen wrote to
her—so cold—so heartless.

“Perhaps she was *made*
moiselle Juliani.

“Made! Who should make

“Her husband. Husband
sometimes, you know.”

“But why should her husband
ing? He must be a brute
must be much changed if after
her doing what she wishes.
she must have been changed
Edward Annesley to marry
Caldwell.”

“You, at all events, ought
her for that; for if she had
Caldwell, you would not have
those rich abbey lands, as
castle.”

“What do you mean?” she
head, and looking at her in surprise
has that to do with Ellen’s

Mademoiselle Juliani was
by nature and from want of
She had known of Lord C
view with Lord Ethelwode

manner towards Mr. Annesley immediately afterwards had aroused her suspicions. Her curiosity once excited, she had never rested till it was satisfied. She observed the sudden and extraordinary influence Lord Caldwell exercised over his former enemy, and she attributed it to the right cause. When, afterwards, her partnership in his guilt brought her into closer intimacy with Lord Caldwell, she had ventured to question him upon the subject, and he, glad of an opportunity to humble the haughty baron in anybody's opinion, had made no secret of the transaction between them.

Mademoiselle Juliani too hated the baron. She had lived ten years in his family, during which he had treated her with invariable contempt and disregard, as a plebeian and a toad-eater, and, worse still, toad-eater to his wife. She was glad now of an opportunity to revenge herself, although she had had no deliberate intention of doing so; and, in answer to Egbert's eager and repeated questions, she allowed him to draw from her by degrees the whole story of his father's dishonourable compact with Lord Caldwell, and the means he had used to attain the object of his ambition, by separating Ellen from Edward, and urging her on to a marriage with Lord Caldwell.

"And did she still care for Annesley? Was she urged on to marry Lord Caldwell against her will?" asked Egbert.

"No, not against her will. She was made to believe that Mr. Annesley had used her ill, and she married out of desperation. She was nearly mad, I thought, on her wedding-day, but nobody saw it but me. Lady Ethelwode never observes any

thing, you know; and Lord Ethelwode was too happy at having gained the abbey lands, to think of any thing else."

"I do not believe it!" exclaimed Egbert, starting up, his eyes flashing, and his countenance, which had been very pale, reddening with anger. "I do not believe my father would have acted so dishonourably for all the lands in the universe. I will go to him instantly, and know the truth."

"No, no, no! for Heaven's sake, do not speak to him about it," cried Mademoiselle Juliani, catching hold of him, as he was leaving the room; "of course he will deny it, and he will kill me for telling you. Do not go, Mr. Egbert, for mercy's sake!"

"I will not speak of you," said Egbert, scornfully; "let me go, I will know the truth; upon my honour I will not mention you; let me go, I say."

He broke from her grasp, and ran to the library, where he knew he should find Lord Ethelwode.

"Egbert, my dear boy, what is the matter?" exclaimed the latter, as the boy rushed in, his face almost convulsed with agitation.

In a few hurried words, Egbert related what he had just heard.

"But I do not believe it," added he, as he concluded; "it is not true; father, say that it is not true."

Lord Ethelwode had grown pale as death, whilst his son spoke, and his eyes fell beneath the boy's eager gaze.

"Who told you this?" said he, at length, in a hoarse voice.

"I promised not to tell; but no matter who it

was. I would not believe it, though an angel had told me, if you say it is not true. Father, father," continued he, in a tone of agonized earnestness, as Lord Ethelwode remained silent; "only tell me that it is not true." The lie rose to Lord Ethelwode's lips, but he could not utter it. His son's intense gaze seemed to drag the truth from the very depths of his soul. His head sank on his breast, and he covered his face with his hands. The proud, stern man sat like a trembling culprit before his child.

"Father!" almost screamed the boy, "why do you not speak? Why do you not deny it?"

"I cannot," gasped forth the wretched man. "Egbert, my son, my son! do not despise me."

Egbert sank down on a chair, sobbing as if his heart would break: and well it might, that young heart, now just discovering that the being it had loved and revered above all others was utterly unworthy. Surely, if there be a bitter hour in life, it is that in which our faith in those we love is first hopelessly darkened.

"Egbert, do not turn away from me," said Lord Ethelwode, in an imploring tone. "I did it for your sake; I did it that I might regain for you the lands of your forefathers—that I might see you great and honoured as they were."

"And could you think there was any value in the honour bought by infamy?" said Egbert, suddenly looking up, and repressing his tears. "Could you think that I would not rather dig, beg, starve, than obtain the richest inheritance in England at the sacrifice of Ellen's happiness—of Edward Annesley's—that noble Edward, who saved my life—who saved Ellen's, who was my best, kindest

friend? If you did, you must have thought me as base as ——; no matter. I tell you now that I scorn, that I loathe the wealth thus acquired; that I will never set my foot again on those lands while they are yours; that, whenever they become mine, I will sell them again instantly; that I would give lands a thousand-fold greater and richer to be the son of an honest pauper, rather than inherit from you the rank and wealth you have dishonoured."

He rushed from the room, and Lord Ethelwode was left alone. The father and son did not meet again till both were summoned to the death-bed of Lady Ethelwode, and Egbert started, as he looked up for a moment to his father's face; it was scarcely recognizable, but neither of them spoke; Lady Ethelwode was dying, and both watched in silence beside her till the long struggle was over, and the weak spirit had entered the eternity it never thought of, until it stood at the very threshold. Then Egbert threw himself on the body, and gave way to the grief that had accumulated so fast and heavily on his young heart; and his father, after gazing upon him for a moment with fixed and tearless eyes, turned away and left the room.

From that hour Lord Ethelwode was an altered man; premature old age seemed to have come over his mind and body; the stately form was bent; the proud, firm step tottered, the haughty gaze was dimmed. He shrank from the sight of every living being; and the presence of his once idolized son seemed to wither up the feeble life that remained to him. And those who had known him and Lady Ethelwode in other days, marvelled, that he who had been such a neglectful husband, should have become such a broken-hearted widower.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"*D. Pedro.* Runs not this speech like iron through your blood?

Claudio. I have drunk poison, whiles he uttered it.

D. Pedro. But did my brother set thee on to this?

Bora. Yea, and paid me richly for the practice of it."

Much Ado about Nothing.

The morning after the *fête*, Ellen had tried again to wring from her husband permission to go to Ethelwode; but he was immoveable in his refusal, replying to all her entreaties and expostulations that he could not leave town, and that he did not choose her to leave it without him; and that, probably, Lady Ethelwode's illness was all fancy, and that they should soon hear that she was quite well again. Egbert's letter, announcing Lady Ethelwode's death, arrived whilst he was yet speaking, and gave a sternly significant answer to his careless conjectures.

"And I could not go to her," exclaimed Ellen, in bitter grief—"they were all with her, and I—I alone—who should have been the first to fly to her, was forced to stay away. Whilst she was dying, I was fooling away the time in a ball-room, and she thought I *would* not come to her. Oh, my mother; my poor mother!"

Lord Caldwell rose and left the room. His wife's

grief conveyed a reproach he could not help feeling that he deserved, and which, at such a moment, he could not cast back with a taunt. He left her alone, therefore, to bear her sorrow as best she might.

It was a heavier one than Ellen herself would have anticipated. Although Lady Ethelwode had never shown much affection to her, and had been scarcely a mother but in name; although there had been between them no community of feeling or pursuits, scarcely even companionship, still Ellen felt that it was a mother she had lost. The tie which had bound her to the dead had never been felt so strongly as now that it was broken for ever. Her life, too, was so desolate, so friendless, she could little spare the only being from whom she could claim affection as a right. And then, after the first spontaneous burst of grief was over, came the thought so strange, so awful: her mother was gone *for ever*. The features, which seemed still present to her in the daily, familiar expression of life, were set in the rigid solemnity of death; she could never look upon them again. The voice, whose accents seemed to echo in her ear, was silent for ever; no power could awaken it again, or bring its sound once more to her aching sense. The being whose existence had been so intermingled with hers, that every recollection till the last year was inseparably connected with her, and whom she remembered ever occupied with the every day cares, the common and familiar occurrences of life, had passed away into the shadow of the awful mystery of the grave; the spirit which had animated that well-known form had fled—whither? She had passed from the earth like a dream, and her child might never see her

more. Oh, there is no word so hard to apprehend by the wondering, sorrow-stricken heart as that *never*; none which, when apprehended, strikes so heavily, so chillingly upon it!

As Ellen gradually came to understand its force, another and bitterer source of grief opened within her. Every careless word, every angry thought, every slight act of neglect towards the dead came back to her mind now—now that she could not ask for forgiveness—now that she could not redeem her past short-comings by future care and affection. What was done could not be undone—death had sealed and finished all. Death!—what volumes of awful, mysterious significance lie in that common, lightly-uttered word!

Lord Caldwell, who knew that Lady Ethelwode had never been an affectionate mother, and who could not understand the feelings which made Ellen mourn her now as if she had been the best and dearest, was first astonished and then provoked at the greatness of her grief. It was irritating to see perpetually her pale, sorrowful countenance and tearful eyes, whilst *he* felt no cause for sorrow or tears, and still more so to be obliged to shut up his house, and put on an outward appearance of woe, which he could not feel. For the first few days he bore it quietly enough; but, when a fortnight had passed away, and still Ellen shrank as sensitively as ever from all mention of society, and her tears rose as quickly if any thing recalled her loss, he grew angry with her for what he called her perversity in mourning so unreasonably, when he wished her to be comforted.

To add to his grievances, the baby, who had never thrived well since he had forced Ellen to

give up nursing it, fell seriously ill, a few days before the time he had fixed to go into the country. This was the more provoking, as there was now little amusement to be found in town. Parliament was prorogued—the season was over—one by one, friends and acquaintances had taken their annual flight, some to country-seats, some to watering-places, some abroad, but all away from London. The hitherto crowded metropolis was empty—the streets silent—the clubs deserted. There was no one to speak to—nothing to be done—and Lord Caldwell's wrath waxed hot against his wife for condemning him, as he chose to consider it, to such intolerable *ennui*.

It was on his return, one day, from a solitary ride in the dusty, parched, deserted park, which had by no means contributed to soften his irritation, that he found on his table a note and card from Mademoiselle Juliani.

He violently rang the bell, and asked who had left them, in a tone which made the servant wish himself out of the room again.

"It was the lady herself, my lord."

"What lady? Who do you mean?"

"The Italian lady, my lord, that used to live with Lady Ethelwode."

"You are quite sure it was she?"

"Quite, my lord; she was very anxious to see your lordship, and said she would call again this evening."

"I desire that she is not let in—not only this evening, but never. If she is allowed at any time to set foot within this house, you and the porter will go out of it the next moment. Do you hear?"

"Yes, my lord."

“Then, go; tell the porter what I have said, and take care that you both remember my warning.”

The man gladly made his exit, and Lord Caldwell addressed himself to the perusal of Mademoiselle Juliani's note. It stated that Lady Ethelwode's death had left her without a situation, and that she was more than ever anxious to return to Italy, instead of entering into another family: that, although Lord Ethelwode had given her a pension, it was too small for her to live upon, in independence, there or any where else; and that she therefore appealed once more to his lordship's justice and generosity. The note was written in an humble tone, but she took care to insinuate that she considered his threats as perfectly idle, and gave him to understand that she should make use of any means in her power to wring from him the fulfilment of his promises.

“Fool!” exclaimed Lord Caldwell, as he crushed the note in his hands, after reading it, “does she suppose that I am to be wheedled or bullied by a reptile like her?”

Yet, in spite of this contempt for his ancient accomplice, her vicinity was by no means pleasant to him. Her arrival in town determined him to leave it immediately, which would have the two-fold advantage of enabling him to avoid her importunities, and of rescuing him from the *ennui* of his present existence. He threw her note into the fire, waited to see it consumed, and then went in search of Ellen, to acquaint her with this sudden determination.

Ellen was in the nursery, which she had scarcely quitted for several days and nights. Her infant

was lying on her lap, and she was bending over it, intently watching it as it slept, as if her life hung on each low, short breath. She raised her head for an instant as her husband came in, and put her finger to her lips. He noiselessly closed the door, and crossed the room to the spot where she was sitting. She looked up with a bright smile—the first he had seen on her countenance for many days, and said in a low voice—

“She is better now.”

“Thank God!” exclaimed Lord Caldwell, involuntarily, and Ellen thanked him for this expression of interest in his child with such a look of tearful, heartfelt gratitude, that he turned away conscience-stricken.

It was several minutes before he remembered the purpose for which he had sought his wife, and then it was in a voice almost as low and gentle as her own that he told her, he wished to speak to her.

“Not here—not now?” said Ellen, anxiously. Lord Caldwell half uttered an impatient exclamation, but his wife’s imploring look arrested it on his lips. At any other time, perhaps, that look would have increased his irritation; but there was something in the stillness of that darkened room, in the peacefulness of the infant’s slumber, the holy beauty of the mother’s watch, which subdued his angry feelings. He stood some time in silence, contemplating his wife and child; and then, telling Ellen that he would wait to speak to her till the child woke, he left the room as quietly as he had entered it.

Ellen joined him in less than an hour; she came with a light step and bright countenance, for the

doctor had just been with her, and pronounced the child to be in a fair way of recovery.

"I am glad of it," said Lord Caldwell. "In that case, there can be no objection to our leaving town to-morrow, which I mean to do."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Ellen. "The child's life is scarcely out of danger. It would be madness to attempt to move her in her present weak state, especially as there can be no object in such a sudden removal."

"No object to you, I dare say, but a very great one to me," replied her husband, all his irritation returning at these words. "Whilst you spend your whole life in the nursery, thinking of nothing but that sickly baby, you forget me altogether. I have consented to stay shut up here for the last month, although we are the only people left in London; but I will stay no longer. The child is better, and I am determined to leave town to-morrow."

Ellen was well aware that when her husband took this tone, resistance was generally unavailing; but this was not a point to be conceded without a struggle.

"And is it for such a motive as this—for the sake of escaping a few days *ennui*, that you would risk our child's life?" said she, striving to repress the bitterness which arose in her heart. "If you are so bent upon going, why make us go too? why should you not go alone?"

"Alone! yes, that would just suit you. You would be delighted, no doubt, to get rid of me; but I did not marry you to be always left alone, and I insist upon your preparing yourself to accompany

me to-morrow. If the child cannot be moved, you can leave her behind till she is well enough."

"Leave her! leave my child!" exclaimed Ellen, turning pale at the thoughts of such hitherto undreamed-of misery.

"Yes—why not? She does not want you; she has got her nurse and the doctor; quite enough, I am sure, to take care of her; and she will be all the better for not being over-petted and nursed by you; I thing it will be much the best plan to leave her."

"And is it possible you should think I would leave my child at such a time to the care of servants? Is it possible that you yourself should be so utterly indifferent to her as to wish it? Are you not her father? Is she not your child as well as mine; and can you speak as if her life and death were the same to you? Oh, no, no, you do not, cannot mean it; it is only a cruel jest."

"I am in no jesting mood," said her husband, sternly, "nor am I to be jested with. I have determined on leaving town to-morrow, and you shall go with me, whether the child is sick or well, lives or dies; so remember to hold yourself in readiness accordingly."

Ellen stood silent, tearless, almost stunned by the brutality which seemed incredible, even from him; and it was not till he had left the room, and the loud noise of the slamming door startled her, that she recovered from her stupor. Her first impulse was to return to her child, but, exhausted by the many anxious days and sleepless nights she had lately passed, she had little strength to encounter such scenes as this; she sank powerless on the sofa, and broke into passionate weeping.

All the scorn, all the insults, which her husband had heaped upon her, returned at this moment to her mind, and swelled the tide of grief. She felt utterly desolate; there was none to share or soothe her sorrow—none to shield her from his tyranny. She felt herself a blighted, doomed thing; unloved—deserted by all who should have loved her most; and now her child, whom God had given her in his mercy, that its love might replace all others—her child, round whose existence her desolate heart had twined its crushed affections, clung to as its only treasure—even that was to be taken from her. Then, as the awakened tide of memory rushed over her soul, came the thought of what had caused all her misery. She remembered how, where she had most loved—most trusted, she had been deceived, deserted, scorned; the desperation which had urged her to her fatal marriage once more darkened her heart. Even her child was forgotten, as memory after memory of the past rose with the distinctness of a vision, making her live through again, in those few minutes, every event of her miserable history. Her brain grew dizzy, and she pressed her hands to her forehead, with a sudden fear that her senses were deserting her. She rose from the sofa, and hurried from the room, as if change of place could bring change of thought.

As she reached the foot of the staircase, she caught the sound of a well-known voice, expostulating loudly with the porter in the hall. She stopped; she thought she could not be mistaken in those peculiar foreign tones, and approaching the hall-door, which was open, she immediately recognised in the stranger, who was speaking with vehement gesticulations to the impassable porter.

the features of her old go
Juliani.

"I tell you, ma'am, it can be done. "It's as much as my life to get you in against my lord's pos-

"But Lady Caldwell—I
well; there is no order again

"Yes, ma'am. The order was given to be allowed to set your foot on the ground. I am very sorry, ma'am, to be unable to do so," added he, in a more respectful tone. "The mademoiselle Juliani held out a hand to me, but I dare not do it—I cannot find place."

Mademoiselle Juliani wrenched her teeth with rage immovable. She was on the house, when Ellen, who had astonishment to this colloquy comprehend what motive couldous order of exclusion against insignificant, came forward. Mademoiselle Juliani flew toward vehement expressions of dissenting forth into such a torrent felt it would be advisable hearing of the servants, who

"Come up with me to-morrow, and I will take upon myself to *consigne*."

Mademoiselle Juliani for
exulting glance at the morti
himself before Lady Caldwe
leaving the hall.

"Of course, my lady, as

be let in, I can't withstand you; but I hope you will tell my lord it was not my fault."

"Certainly. I will take all the blame upon myself; you have nothing to fear."

The porter bowed, and returned to his seat, whilst Ellen led her companion to her dressing-room, where she thought they were least likely to be interrupted.

They sat for some time in silence. Ellen's thoughts were again busy with the past, which the sight of her mother's companion brought back more vividly, more bitterly, than before. Mademoiselle Juliani was marking, not without a touch of sorrow, the mournful change that had come over her old pupil, and striving to read in her altered countenance how the revelations she was going to make were likely to be received. It was clear that all her efforts to obtain the fulfilment of Lord Caldwell's promises were hopeless; and it was a sudden impulse of revenge which had made her determine on discovering to his wife the treachery to which she had fallen a victim.

Ellen spoke first; her thoughts had reverted to the strangeness of her husband's order of exclusion against Mademoiselle Juliani, and she was perplexed to assign any reason for it, except another tyrannical caprice to keep from her one who, as her mother's companion, she would naturally be anxious to see.

"I cannot understand," said she, half thinking, aloud, "why Lord Caldwell should have so positively forbidden your being admitted."

"I can, perfectly," muttered the Italian, as a strange smile passed over her face.

Ellen looked at her.

"I think I heard you say you had something of importance to say to me. Was it any thing about my poor mother? you were with her to the last, I believe."

"Yes, she died in my arms," said Mademoiselle Juliani, fixing her eyes on Ellen. "It was a great grief to her that you did not come—it seemed to trouble her more than any thing else; and we were obliged to invent all sorts of reasons for your not coming—especially as, in your letter, your ladyship gave none."

Ellen turned away, unable to speak; the tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"I was sure, however, that it was not your ladyship's fault; and so I told your poor dear mother."

"And she?—did she not believe it?" said Ellen, struggling to speak, though her voice was so choked as to be scarcely audible.

"I hope she did, at times; but it was a hard thing to believe that any thing could keep away a daughter at such a moment."

"Hard, indeed!" said Ellen, all her indignation at her husband's cruelty rising again. "No one could believe it—no one could conceive such tyranny to be possible."

"Then it was as I suspected," exclaimed Mademoiselle Juliani; "you were *forced* to stay away. I was afraid it was so; I knew enough of Lord Caldwell to believe him capable of any degree of tyranny or brutality."

At any other time, Ellen's pride would have made her silence the accuser of her husband, but at that moment pride was forgotten. She looked up in astonishment at Mademoiselle Juliani, and asked

what she could possibly know of her husband's character to induce her to form such surmises.

"Much—far too much," replied the Italian. "Would to Heaven I had never known him! I should have been a happier and more innocent woman."

"What do you mean—what has Lord Caldwell to do with you? For God's sake, explain these dark insinuations!" exclaimed Ellen, with trembling eagerness, as one to whom some horrible object, which she half wishes, half dreads, to see, is about to be disclosed.

"It is a long story, and one that concerns you much to hear; but I cannot tell it you without implicating myself. I have wronged you deeply, and I will not say one word until you promise that you will forgive me, or, at least, if that is impossible, that you will not punish me for what I have done, but give me the means of immediately leaving this country. Promise this, and I will tell you all."

"I will promise that no injury shall be done to you; but I cannot do more. I have nothing which is not his."

"Give me what you have," said Mademoiselle Juliani; "I will not put myself in your power till I have the means of escaping from it. I will not trust to your promise. Surely, it is a small price to pay for what you would once, at least, have given your heart's blood to know."

Ellen hastily rose, opened her *secrétaire*, took out a handful of bank-notes, and, with a trembling hand, gave them to Mademoiselle Juliani.

"He will half kill me if he finds it out," said she; "but it does not signify. Is that enough?"

Are you satisfied? Then speak, for God's sake! speak quick."

"I will. But first promise again that I shall never suffer for what I am now going to reveal; that you will not accuse me by word or deed."

"I solemnly promise it."

Mademoiselle Juliani was now satisfied; and, without further delay, she began the tale of Lord Caldwell's treachery. It was with an appearance of deep remorse and contrition that she told of the strong temptation by which he had won her over to assist him; but as she went on to relate the deceit she had practised upon Ellen, the falsehood by which she had worked on her to distrust Edward Annesley, Ellen started up with a look and tone as if the weight which had so long crushed her to the earth had been suddenly lifted up.

"Then he was not false! he did not deceive and desert me, as I believed! he loved me! oh, my God, he loved me! But why did he not come? One word would have undeceived me. Why did he write that cruel letter?"

"He did not write it. He came—he was in town many days, but I kept him from you at Lord Caldwell's instigation. He wrote to you again and again—but that letter....."

"It was his writing; who could have written it but him?"

"It was forged; your husband wrote the copy, and forced me to forge the writing. Your letter was never sent."

"Woman! woman! what have you done?" cried Ellen, springing towards her.

"Do not curse me," said the Italian, cowering beneath the expression of her countenance.

“Why should I not curse you? Have you not made my whole existence a curse? Have you not taken from me hope, trust, love, happiness, and left me a wretched, blighted, desperate thing?”

“It was not I; it was your husband. He tempted me; I did not think to go so far; he forced me on. Curse your husband, not me.”

“My husband!” muttered Ellen, sinking back into the seat she had left, and hiding her face in her hands. “But, perhaps,” added she, suddenly rousing herself again, “perhaps, you are now deceiving me, to get that money from me. What proofs can you give of all this?”

“I should have thought that you would not need much proof to convince you that I do not accuse myself falsely; but if you want proofs, there are Mr. Annesley’s letters; I kept them against such a day as this.”

Ellen seized the letters with a trembling hand. As she untied the parcel, she raised her eyes, and saw Mademoiselle Juliani’s fixed upon her with an expression half of pity, half of contempt.

“Why do you stay there?” exclaimed she, vehemently. “Go, leave me—leave me, I say; your very presence seems to blight me.”

“I will go,” said the Italian, rising slowly; “you will never be irritated by my presence again. But I have known you for many years—from a child upwards. I am not so hardened as I seem; I should go happier if you could say that you forgive me.”

“Forgive you!” said Ellen; and the tone in which she spoke told that all the wrongs she had suffered were present and burning in her mind.

Mademoiselle Juliani answered the tone rather than the words.

"I know what you would say; but if I have been the cause of your misery, I have now done what I could to repair the evil. Have I not accused, degraded myself in your eyes, to prove to you that he you loved was not unworthy?—that his love ever has been—still is, yours? May not this entitle me to forgiveness?"

"I forgive you," said Ellen, in a low voice; "go—may God forgive you, as I do!"

The Italian seized her hand, and kissed it, and as she did so, Ellen felt a tear fall upon it. The next moment she left the room, and Ellen was left alone with Edward's letters.

Better had it been for her, could she have had courage to burn those letters without reading them. What was done, could not be undone. She was a wife, a mother; and as such, there was danger in those expressions of a love which ought now to be forgotten. But it was not possible that Ellen, who had been through life the slave of passion, listening to, and obeying its voice only, should refuse to hear it now in the hour of its wildest power, and cast its dominion from her with an heroic, lofty virtue, which few, even of those trained by long habit to self-denial, would have been able to practice. Eagerly, yet tremblingly, she opened the letters; the very sight of that once familiar handwriting was to her like the return of a long-lost and beloved friend. As rapidly as she could for tears, she read note after note; and as she read, a dark veil seemed rent from her soul; the crushed, but undestroyed love of her girlhood, rose and swelled in her heart with all its ancient

strength ; she forgot that she was a wife, she even forgot that she was a mother ; she was once again Ellen Percival, the beloved, the betrothed of Edward Annesley. And he—what could he think ? what could he have felt ? Must he not believe that she had deserted, betrayed him—sacrificed his affection for rank and gold ?

As this thought arose in her fevered mind, already worked up to a state of excitement approaching to madness, a wild, passionate desire to see Edward once more, to tell him that she had been deceived, that she had never ceased to love him, to implore his forgiveness, took possession of her whole soul. Without a moment's reflection, she yielded to the impulse which urged her on with such tumultuous force. She hastily put on a shawl and bonnet, and, with rapid steps, crossed the spacious apartments, and reached the hall. The porter and the footmen stared in astonishment at the sight of their lady going out at such an hour, and alone ; but, with the usual automatism of English servants, none of them asked if their services were required ; the door was thrown open for her, closed again, and she was in the street. It was twilight, and she hurried on, unrecognized and unmarked, in that now deserted quarter. She had heard perpetually of Edward, as the fashionable preacher at —— chapel ; and, in her confused state of mind, she thought only of seeking him there. The chapel was in the Strand. It was dark by the time she reached the crowded thoroughfare ; and the gas-lamps were lighted : as she hurried along, many turned round to look after the young, richly dressed, and strangely beautiful woman, who made her way through the crowd with such a gliding and rapid motion as to

make her seem like an apparition. Ellen passed unheeding on; she saw and heard nothing; one idea alone filled her mind.

Once her passage was stopped by a group of young men, one of whom rudely seized her arm, and, looking under her bonnet, made some insulting remark on her beauty. But she looked up to him with an expression so wild, so imploring, that he released his hold. Ellen darted on, whilst the man's companions broke into a coarse laugh at his discomfiture.

When she reached the chapel the door was open; there had been a week-day lecture, and the crowd was pouring out. Ellen could not make her way against the stream, but her wild, anxious expression, as she looked towards the door, attracted the beadle's attention, and he civilly asked her if she wanted any one there.

"Mr. Annesley? he is here, is he not?"

"No, ma'am; he did not preach to-night: but if you want to see him, he is, probably, at his own house, over the way there."

Ellen turned away, and, in a moment, had reached the house the man pointed out. Had she been forced to pause to ring the bell, her recollection might have returned; but the door was open; the maid was standing on the steps, speaking to a tradesman.

"Mr. Annesley!" gasped out Ellen, as she glided into the house.

The maid turned round, and showed the way upstairs.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Oh! curse me not, she cried——
———though I am lost,
Think not that guilt, that falsehood made me fall:
No, no! 'twas grief, 'twas madness did it all."
Lalla Rookh.

"There she lies——
Who should have been my own."
BARRY CORNWALL.

Edward had been writing, but he had laid down his pen, and was sitting in rapt meditation. Something in the train of thought he had been pursuing had suddenly struck the mysterious chord of association, and had led him back to the days of his early love. As he sat there, his head leaning on his hands, the present was wholly forgotten. The small apartment, with its dingy walls and homely furniture; the multifarious noises of the busy street, which rose up from below, and broke the stillness with jarring discord, were still present to his senses, but conveyed no impression to his mind; for other scenes were pictured there. He was again gazing on the glorious scenery of his boyhood's home; the low, deep murmur of the sea was sounding in his ears, and beside him stood Ellen—Ellen, in all the purity and radiance of her early beauty; and her eyes were beaming on him with the unutterable love

of other days ; and her voice mingled its music with the music of earth, and air, and sea, like the articulate expression of the gladness, the dumb elements could only faintly murmur. The present was indeed forgotten, with its cheerless realities ; and Edward's spirit was bathing in that flood of bright memories which brought the past so clearly, so vividly before him, as almost to confirm the mysterious theory of the idealist, that the past no less truly exists than the present, and is only hidden from us by that "time-vesture," which enwraps our spirit here, and which only, at rare intervals, can we pierce through and discern the mysterious reality beyond.

He was aroused from his trance by the sound of the door slowly opening. He looked up, vexed that his bright vision should be dispelled ; but, as his eyes fell on the intruder, he started into a sudden fear that his over-active fancy was making his senses play him false. There, by the door, stood Ellen, but not the Ellen of his early love, such as he had conjured her back to his mind's eye. A cloud had fallen over that bright, Eve-like loveliness ; pale, trembling, woe-worn, she stood, more, as it seemed to Edward's astonished gaze, like a mournful phantom than a being of flesh and blood.

"Edward !" gasped forth the wretched woman.

"Ellen ! is it, can it be you ?" exclaimed Annesley, starting up, as that well-remembered voice, unlike any other on earth, changed and broken though it was, thrilled to his very heart's core. "Why are you here ? or am I indeed still dreaming ?"

"No, no ! it is no dream," cried Ellen, springing forward, as if the sound of his voice had broken

the spell of indistinct fear, which rooted her to the spot where she stood, and, falling at his feet, "it is indeed Ellen! your false, perjured, unworthy Ellen! Oh! Edward, forgive me! forgive me! I did not know what I was doing: I was deceived, betrayed, goaded on to madness, yet all the while my heart was true. Oh, Edward!" she continued, passionately clasping her hands, and raising her streaming eye to his, "look upon me—in mercy speak to me. Am I not humbled enough? have I not suffered enough? Oh! you do not know how bitterly you have been avenged! and will you not say that you forgive me? will you not speak to me one word to save me from madness? But I have deserved it—deserved it all," added she, in a choked voice, cowering down on the floor, and hiding her face in her hands.

Edward had stood whilst she spoke, like one transfixed; but as she sank down he sprang towards her. What stern and faultless moralist shall blame him, if, at that moment, he forgot the barrier which divided him from her—if he forgot that she was the wife of another—forgot everything but that she, his early beloved, whom he had worshipped as the incarnation of all beauty, and purity, and gladness, lay at his feet, crushed, heart-broken, humbled to the very dust? He raised her from the floor, he kissed again and again that pale, damp brow, he placed her on the couch, and, kneeling beside her, strove to recall her from the state of insensibility into which she had fallen, by calling on her with every old endearing appellation he had been used in former days to couple with her name. But it was of no avail; the incessant and violent emotion of so many hours had utterly exhausted her. Overtasked nature could endure

no more, and she lay on the sofa, where he had placed her, cold, motionless, stiff as a corpse.

For a moment Edward thought she was indeed gone; he bent over her in agonised anxiety, and, perhaps, only senses sharpened by such acute fear, could have detected the faint pulsation, the scarcely perceptible breath, which indicated that life had not yet departed. He hastily rang the bell, and ran out to call the maid-servant to assist her, whilst he himself went in search of medical assistance. As he reached the landing-place, he heard Mrs. Allen's voice below. Never had that voice been so welcome as now.

"Mother, mother," he called out, "come up, come up quickly, or she will die before we can do anything to save her."

Mrs. Allen, greatly alarmed and astonished, hastened up the stairs as fast as her age and infirmities would allow her; but Louisa, who was with her, ran up more quickly, and followed Edward into the room.

"Good heavens—Ellen here!" exclaimed she, springing forward to the sofa, whereon Ellen still lay utterly insensible.

These words, for the first time, recalled Edward to the sense of Ellen's real position. His brow flushed crimson as he turned away from Louisa's inquiring glance.

"I cannot tell you how it happened," said he, hurriedly; "I scarcely know myself. But if we would recall her to life, I fear we have no time to lose. I will leave her now, to my mother and to you, and go at once for medical assistance."

So saying, he hastily left the room, as Mrs. Allen entered it. If any secret spark of resent-

ment against her who had brought so much misery on Edward yet lingered in Mrs. Allen's gentle nature, it must have been extinguished now at the sight of her former gladsome favourite, lying there, seemingly, in nature's last agony. In silent and tearful wonder did she and Louisa loosen Ellen's dress, chafe her hands and feet, and try every means of bringing her back to consciousness. Their efforts were still unsuccessful, however, when Edward returned with the apothecary. The remedies the latter applied at length recalled Ellen to animation, but a heavy stupor seemed to deaden all her faculties, and deprive her of all consciousness of her position. The medical man ordered her to be put to bed, and kept in perfect quiet. If this could be done, and fever avoided, there was, he said, a chance of her recovery; but, if she were again exposed to the slightest excitement, he could not answer for the consequences: death, or even worse—madness, might ensue.

"But could she not," asked Mrs. Allen, anxiously, "be moved whilst this heavy stupor makes her unconscious of everything? It is of the greatest consequence to her that she should, if possible, be taken back to her own house."

"If you wish to kill her outright, you may certainly move her," said the doctor, bluntly. "If not, you will leave her where she is, and far from carrying her from house to house, you will not even lift her head from the pillow, or let a whisper reach her ears. I tell you again, that nothing but the most perfect quiet can save her life, and even that may fail. Good evening, ladies. I will send you the medicine immediately, and shall call again

in a few hours." So saying, he took up his hat and stick, and walked away.

Edward, who had waited outside in intense anxiety, striving in vain to man himself to bear the tidings he dreaded, met him in the passage, and, in answer to his scarcely intelligible inquiry, the somewhat ruffled Esculapius repeated his opinion, and charged him, as a more sensible being than those "foolish womenkind," as he termed Louisa and Mrs. Allen, not to allow Ellen, on any account, to be disturbed.

"She shall not, I promise you," said Edward, with a deep sigh; and the worthy man, satisfied with this promise, went away, little thinking of all the woeful consequences it might entail upon his hapless patient.

Edward did think of them, and with fear and sorrow. He saw clearly that, by the desperate step Ellen had taken, she had risked a woman's best treasure—her reputation. She had fled from her husband's house to that of her former lover, and Edward but too plainly perceived what a dreadful inference her husband and the world would be justified in drawing from such an act.

Mrs. Allen and Louisa had foreseen this also, and they had hoped to save Ellen from the consequences of her madness, by removing her from that fatal house before her flight had become publicly known. The doctor's prohibition destroyed this hope, and, after his departure, they sat in perplexed and mournful silence, in the room adjoining that in which Ellen lay, anxiously pondering on the evils which might yet await her.

"What can be done?" said Mrs. Allen, at last, speaking the thought which occupied all three.

There seemed little hope of this question being satisfactorily answered. Edward had related, as clearly as he could, the manner of Ellen's sudden apparition, and the substance of the wild impassioned address which had ended in her fainting-fit. But little was to be gathered from this as to the provocation which had driven her from her home, or the circumstances under which she had left it, and it was proportionably difficult to decide on what course ought to be pursued. One thing was clearly right; that Edward should leave the house immediately. He ought not to remain an instant longer than could be avoided, under the same roof with Lady Caldwell. His absence might put a stop to the worst rumours which would arise when her flight became public, and he determined to leave town immediately. Mrs. Allen and Louisa agreed with him as to the expediency of this measure, although the former could not repress a sigh at the thought of the pang that determination must have cost him. She knew, though he said it not, that it was no light sacrifice to him to go away whilst Ellen's life hung in suspense.

"Where will you go, my dear boy?" she anxiously inquired.

"No matter whither; any where—where my presence will not injure *her*. I will write to you. I have a few things to settle before I go, which I must do at once, and I will come back to wish you good-bye."

He left the room, and Mrs. Allen looked sorrowfully after him; Louisa recalled her to the business of the moment. After some further deliberation, it was decided between them, that Lord Caldwell should be immediately apprised of his

unhappy wife's place of refuge, and her precarious situation. This difficult and delicate task fell on Louisa, who, as Ellen's friend, and unconnected with Edward, was the fittest person to fulfil it. In her utter ignorance of the cause and circumstances of Ellen's flight, she thought it better to confine herself to the simple statement of her arrival at the house in a state bordering on delirium, and the dangerous attack which had followed. She took care to mention Edward's departure, and to speak of Ellen as under the roof and the venerable protection of Mrs. Allen, with whom she herself was residing at the time. She entreated Lord Caldwell to lose no time in hastening to his unhappy wife, whose hours were perhaps numbered, and to save her, by the sanction of his presence, from any injurious imputations, which her temporary absence from his house might subject her to.

When her note was written, Louisa went down stairs to give directions herself to the messenger who was to take it. Edward returned a few minutes after she had left the room. Mrs. Allen had left it also to prepare some medicine for Ellen, and he found it dark and empty. A faint gleam came through the open door of the adjoining apartment where Ellen lay. Edward drew near to the door, and looked in; no one was there; the bed-curtains were closed, and, as he listened, with suspended breath, he could hear Ellen's low, irregular breathing.

She was lying there, within a few paces of him, and an intense longing to look upon her face once more came over him. For a moment he hesitated; he listened if any one were coming, but there was no sound audible but the throbbing of his own

heart. With noiseless step he glided to the bed-side, and drew back the curtain. A candle was burning on the other side of the bed, and through the muslin drapery cast a clear though subdued light on the face of the sleeper. Edward bent down, and gazed intently on those features, so pale, so still, so beautiful, even now, in that semblance of death—those features which, though with far other aspect, had been burnt by passion into his memory, and which, though passion was now subdued, still haunted him in the busy noon, in the silent night, like a ghost of the past, wandering through the desert places of his heart, where the morning light yet beamed not strong enough to lay it to rest in the grave of forgetfulness. And as he gazed, tears, which in the hour of his bitterest agony had never come to his relief, rolled slowly down his cheeks, and fell unheeded on Ellen's pillow. They were tears for her, his early beloved—so changed—so fallen—so desolate; her who had loved him, “not wisely, but too well,” and whose love had brought her to this ruin.

He knelt by the bed-side, and prayed as he had never prayed before, for the stricken and broken-hearted being, whom he might not take to his own bosom, and comfort and cherish, as one that had been lost and was found again. When his prayer was ended, he bent one more long intense gaze on that face he might never see again; and then, slowly turning away, he left the room, as noiselessly as he had entered it. The adjoining one was still empty; he took a slip of paper, wrote a hurried farewell to his grandmother, placed it where she could not fail to see it, and in another moment was out of the house.

CHAPTER XX.

“Where is she gone? Haply, despair hath seiz’d her;
Or, wing’d with fervour of her love, she’s flown
To her desired Posthumus: Gone she is,
To death, or to dishonour; and my end
Can make good use of either.”

Cymbeline.

Lord Caldwell had gone out when he left Ellen, and he did not return till their usual late dinner-hour. The consciousness of his brutality towards her made him rather reluctant to meet her again, and it was not till the last moment that he entered the drawing-room. He found it empty, and, in his irritable mood, was half-inclined to be angry with his wife for not being ready to receive him there, although, the minute before, the thoughts of meeting her had been so distasteful, that he had been on the point of preferring a solitary dinner at his club to a matrimonial *tête-à-tête*. His irritation increased as time passed on, and still Ellen did not make her appearance, and no dinner was announced.

“My lady is sulky, I suppose,” thought he, “but that is no reason why I am to be kept waiting for my dinner;” and he rang the bell to inquire the cause of this delay.

“I did not know we were not to wait for my lady,” said the butler, in answer to his angry question.

“What do you mean? Lady Caldwell will come

down of course when dinner is announced, unless she chooses to dine in her own room."

"The porter told me my lady was not come home, my lord...."

"Not come home! Is she out then? How very extraordinary," he continued, muttering to himself, "that she should stay out so late when she knows how I hate to be kept waiting! Go and ask when she went out, and whether she left any message."

The man went, and soon returned with the intelligence that her ladyship had gone out at five o'clock on foot and alone, and had left no message whatever.

There was something so unusual in such a proceeding, that Lord Caldwell sent for the porter, to interrogate him himself. A sudden fear came over him that his brutality had driven her in madness from the house; and he trembled as he thought of one so young and so beautiful wandering alone through the streets of that wide Babylon, at such an hour and in such a state of mind. Then he remembered Louisa Conway. She might have gone to her.

"Had any one called?—had any one been with her before she went out?" he asked. The porter was silent. He had suspected that Mademoiselle Juliani's visit was in some way connected with Lady Caldwell's extraordinary disappearance, and remembering the warning he had received would have flatly denied her having been admitted. But there was something in Lord Caldwell's look and voice, as he repeated the question, which drove away that lie which was trembling on his lips. He did not dare answer falsely; and, in as few words as possible, he

related the manner of Mademoiselle Juliani's admittance, and excused himself for this breach of his lordship's orders by saying that her ladyship had herself admitted the Italian lady, and that he could not withstand her.

"Fool, dolt, idiot!" exclaimed Lord Caldwell, starting up in ungovernable rage, "did I not tell you to let her in at your peril? How dared you disobey my orders? Do not tell me of Lady Caldwell. If the king himself had told you to do it, you ought to have refused; you ought to have said that I alone was to be obeyed in my own house. Now go—leave the house this instant. You know I gave you warning; and remember," he added, with something of his usual craft making its way through his rage—"remember that I do not turn you off for admitting this particular person, but for having dared to disobey my orders. Tell the other servants so, and let them take warning by your example. By heavens! I will serve them all the same, if they dare take upon themselves to break one tittle of the most trifling order I choose to give."

It was in vain to attempt expostulation or defence at such a moment, and the porter silently and sullenly withdrew.

Lord Caldwell was left alone—alone in the chaos of tumultuous and conflicting passions, which had taken the place of his usual calm callousness. Rage, shame, remorse, fear, swept over his soul with alternate and fearful violence, and he paced the spacious apartment to and fro like a tiger in his cage. His treachery was then discovered; Ellen knew all—his falsehood, his baseness, and, even worse, his rival's unchanging truth. And where was she? It was evident that her flight had been the consequence

of this discovery; but where had the maddening impulse of passion driven her? In her desperation, might she not have committed some fearful act? Lord Caldwell shuddered as these dark fears rose in his mind; but other thoughts rapidly succeeded. She had perhaps fled to that hated rival; already, doubtless, she had disclosed the tale of her husband's treachery, and both were exulting in the discovery of their unchanged love, and execrating the author of their long and miserable separation.

He gnashed his teeth in jealous fury, as he dwelt on this picture, and rushed towards the door, resolved to pursue his wretched wife, and tear her from her lover's arms, though at the same moment he cast her for ever from his own. He was struck back by the recollection that his own guilt was now discovered—that the wife he had trampled on, the rival he had so foully injured, had it in their power to convict him of forgery, to bring him to the most ignominious punishment. He who had till now stood highest and clearest in the world's opinion, the brand of infamy would be affixed to his name. He saw the finger of scorn already pointed at him. He heard the venomous tongues of false friends and sneaking enemies wagging in cowardly malice against him, of whom, till he fell, they had not dared even to whisper disapprobation, and he cursed himself for the folly—it struck him in no other light—with which he had hazarded the hard-earned honours of a life to win a woman whose love he knew to be another's, even whilst she plighted it to him. Could Mademoiselle Juliani have seen him at that hour, she would have felt that she had gained her revenge.

His mind was still tossing in this wild tempest of passion when Louisa's note was brought to him.

Its perusal stilled in some measure the inward storm; his worst fears were set at rest both with regard to Ellen and to himself; and, now that he was called upon to act, he silenced, with habitual self-command, the noisy and struggling passions within, that he might deliberate with the necessary calmness on what was to be done.

It was no easy matter to come to a decision, for the simple and simplifying rule of right and wrong was one which Lord Caldwell was little in the habit of applying to any question, much less to one which involved so much of personal feeling and opposing passions as the present. Ever since Ellen's first rejection of his suit, and his discovery, from her intercepted letter, of the fear and abhorrence with which she looked on a union with him, his former love (if the gross feeling of which he was alone capable may be dignified with such a name) had changed and darkened into revengeful hatred. He hated her for the neglect with which she had treated his suit—for the instinctive fear with which she had shrunk from becoming his wife—for the unchanging love she had borne to his rival, in spite of all the arts by which his character had been blackened and calumniated. He hated, and yet more despised her for the desperate perjury to which he himself had goaded her, when she plighted her faith to him, whilst her whole heart was another's! He hated her for the passionate pride with which, when he threw off the mask of love and gentleness which had beguiled her, she had flung back to him scorn for scorn! But, above all, he hated her for the injury he had done to her! Her presence was, as it were, a living, embodied conscience, perpetually reproaching him as the author of all the misery, all the guilt

which darkened the soul he had found so pure and guileless, perpetually setting before him the hideousness of his own iniquity. And now her presence would bring worse than remorse—shame and humiliation. Now she would feel justified in her scorn—now she might trample upon him as he had trampled upon her.

“No, never!” exclaimed he aloud, with clenched hands and gnashing teeth,—“never shall she return to this house, to insult me with her presence, to triumph over my degradation. She has fled from me to her lover—she has exposed herself to shame and infamy: let her abide the consequences. What matters that she was only mad!—the world will believe her guilty, and I shall be revenged!”

There was one question, however, to be answered, before he could yield to the pleasure of revenge. Was revenge *safe*? As yet, Ellen had evidently revealed nothing of the crime whose discovery had driven her to the desperate step she had taken; but her silence could be reckoned on no longer than her present illness denied her the power of revelation, and if the intercepted letters had been put into her hands by his treacherous accomplice, she had the power, not only to accuse him, but to prove his guilt. Under such circumstances, it would be advisable to get her once more under his power as quickly as possible.

“But perhaps she will die, and then all will be safe,” thought he, and yet he shrank from the thought. Would he not then be her *murderer*? It now occurred to him, what, in the tumult of passion, he had not thought of before, to search Ellen’s apartments, in case she should have left the papers there. He instantly proceeded thither, and at once

discovered the objects of his search. There lay the letters, as she had left them, on the table in her dressing-room. He looked over them—all were there, even the forged letter, which she had taken from the place where she had kept it since the day she received it, without daring to look upon it again, to compare it with the true ones. The paper was blistered over with her tears, and as her husband's eye rested on it for a moment, he involuntarily muttered, "Ay, she has been much wronged." The next moment he threw them into the fire, and stood watching till every particle was destroyed; then, sweeping the ashes under the grate, with a look of satisfaction, he left the room. As he passed along the corridor in which the nursery was situated, the low faint cry of the infant reached his ear. Till that moment he had forgotten its existence, now he rejoiced in it.

"That child will be my best security," thought he. "It will give me a hold on the mother that she will not dare to brave."

There was one more point that he felt it necessary to ascertain, for his complete security. This was Mademoiselle Juliani's vicinity, and her further intentions with regard to himself. Although the night was already far advanced, he at once proceeded to her lodgings, according to the direction she had left on her card. The people of the house were all in bed, and were with difficulty roused to answer his loud and impatient summons. When they did answer it, his fears were at once set at rest. The foreign lady had started by the Dover mail that evening, and had been heard to say that she was going to leave England for ever. Lord Caldwell was satisfied; there was nothing now to prevent

him wreaking what revenge he chose upon his wife. On his return home, he found Louisa's messenger still waiting for his answer. It was quickly given. He wrote a few cold, haughty lines, stating his determination never to receive again into his house the wife who, in leaving it thus, had brought shame and dishonour on herself and him; and requesting that all future communications respecting her should be made through his lawyer, who would receive instructions as to Lady Caldwell's future maintenance. He had resolved, he said, to spare her the public exposure and infamy he had the power to inflict, but any further mercy she could not expect, nor would he ever be induced to concede.

This answer reached Louisa, as she sat watching, with Mrs. Allen, by Ellen's bed-side. She read it, and then gave it to her companion, with an exclamation of indignation, as she looked from it to Ellen's deathlike countenance. But Mrs. Allen laid her hand on her arm.

"Let us pray," said she gently, in a voice scarcely articulate for tears; "that is all we can do for her."

And they knelt by the bed-side, and prayed in silence for the helpless, hapless being who lay there, as unconscious of the passions of which she was the cause, as if death had already closed upon her the iron doors of forgetfulness.

CHAPTER XXI.

" All is o'er
For me on earth, except some years to hide
My shame and sorrow deep in my heart's core."
Don Juan.

It was not till the third day after her flight that Ellen awoke from her deep stupor, and her friends' anxious and unremitting care was rewarded by the assurance of her medical attendant that, unless any sudden shock brought on a relapse, her life and reason were safe. There was much, however, to make them tremble in that "unless," for with consciousness must come the recollection of what had passed, and the knowledge of her present situation; and there was more than enough in this to overwhelm her feeble faculties, and cast her back once more to the fearful verge of madness, from whence she had just escaped. It was thought better that she should not at first see Mrs. Allen, whose presence might recall at once all those dangerous recollections, and Louisa alone was with her when she awoke, as from a trance, and first looked up with an expression of consciousness in her eyes. Her first words showed that nature's strong instinct was still uppermost in the wreck of all her faculties.

"My child? How is my child?" said she, in a voice so low and broken as to be scarcely audible.

Louisa hastily brushed away a tear, as she answered,

"Your child is quite well, dearest; you need not be anxious about her."

"Louisa! is that you? How did you come here? Where am I? I feel as if I had been dreaming—I am so confused."

"You have been very ill, dear Ellen; and you must not exert yourself to talk or to think. I came to nurse you, and I must have you keep quiet."

"But, my child—where is my child? Why do you not bring her to me?"

"Not now. You cannot see her now. She is quite well; do not worry yourself about her."

Ellen's mind was still in a state of torpor, and she allowed herself to be quieted by Louisa's words, and soon dropped off again to sleep. But this could not last long, and, as Louisa sat gazing on her pale countenance as she slept, she turned anxiously over in her mind every means of softening the shock of the misery which must soon be revealed to her.

When Ellen woke again, it was evident, at her first glance, that consciousness had fully returned. She raised herself in the bed, and looked round the room with an expression of bewildered astonishment, and Louisa saw that the recollection of what had preceded her illness was slowly returning. A crimson flush spread over her marble countenance, and her weak frame trembled violently as circumstance after circumstance arose, and, link by link, the broken chain of memory was gathered up again, and brought her back to that strange, miserable meeting with Edward. But here there was a blank.

"Louisa!" exclaimed she, starting up and grasp

ing Louisa's arm, "tell me where am I—what has happened since—since—" She could not finish the sentence, but remained looking into Louisa's face with an expression so wild, so eager, so fearful, that Louisa trembled lest the first words she uttered should break the already slender thread which retained Reason on her seat.

It was in vain, however, that she again strove to quiet and soothe her by vague words—to evade or silence her questions—Ellen *would* be answered—and Louisa, seeing that the danger arising from refusal was as great as that which could ensue from yielding to her, disclosed as gently, as gradually as she could, all that had occurred from the moment of her fainting at Edward's feet. As the clear conception of her situation broke upon Ellen's mind, she covered her crimsoned face with her hands, and sunk back with a groan of agony. Louisa wept in silence beside her, without attempting to speak of comfort. What comfort could there be to a woman now perceiving for the first time, that, by her own desperate act, she had incurred woman's most dreadful punishment, shame and dishonour? What comfort could there be for one who felt that henceforth she was to be an outcast from the companionship of the virtuous—a bye-word—a mark for the finger of scorn to point at; and oh, worse, far worse than even this, that she had forfeited the rights of a mother over her child—that she had herself deserted it, and cast a first and lasting shadow over its young life—that she was still a mother, yet worse than childless? Louisa felt there could be no comfort for such sorrow as this, and she waited in silence till the first fearful agony should be overpast, pray-

ing the while for the wretched sufferer, whom nothing else could avail.

She had to wait long—it was many days before Ellen could listen to any words of consolation. She lay silent, motionless, tearless, shrinking even from meeting Louisa's eye, or from the sound of her voice, as if they made her feel her shame more acutely. It was evident that she was utterly prostrated and broken in heart and mind; and Louisa could scarcely believe, as she watched her day by day, that she was the same being she had once known, whose luxuriance and buoyancy of life had been her most striking characteristic. Still the relapse which Dr. Adams had dreaded did not come. Her youth and excellent constitution struggled successfully even against the deadly enemy they had to contend with, and she recovered slowly, but surely, from the attack which had threatened her life.

Louisa and Mrs. Allen thanked the Almighty, in humble gratitude, for her preservation; but she herself was silent, and they could not tell with what feelings she contemplated the prolongation of life, when all that could cheer or bless it seemed lost to her for ever. As soon as she was able to leave her bed, she expressed an earnest wish to be moved to another house; any where—she did not care whither—but there she could not stay. Though she did not utter it, Louisa saw that the recollection of *whose* house it was, and how she came there, perpetually weighed on her mind and quickened the sense of shame. There was dishonour in the very fact of her being there; and, after a long consultation with Doctor Adams and

Mrs. Allen, they resolved on yielding to her request.

Change of scene and country air were especially recommended for her, and Louisa therefore decided on taking a cottage at Hampstead, where her friend might have the benefit of both, and, at the same time, where she herself could be near enough to the metropolis to transact easily all necessary business with her publisher.

Such a cottage as she wanted was soon found, and, with her usual energy, she speedily accomplished all the preparations for their removal. She was fully rewarded for the trouble she had taken, by the flush of pleasure which passed over Ellen's pale cheek, when she told her what she had done.

"And, if you are well enough, dearest, and the weather is fine, we can move to-morrow," said she, in conclusion.

"*We*, Louisa! what do you mean?"

"What I said—that, please God, all goes well, we will move into our new abode at Hampstead to-morrow."

"Louisa," said Ellen, after a moment's silence, struggling to speak distinctly, "this cannot be. We cannot live together. Have you forgotten that I am a dishonoured woman?—that, to live with me, will throw a stain on your fair name? If I had not been so powerless to do any thing, I would not have suffered you to stay with me so long. Now we must part; I can bear any thing better than to bring disgrace upon you, as I have done upon every one else connected with me."

"My dearest Ellen, you exaggerate your own position. Listen to me; I do not wish to deceive you, or to palliate the rashness, the guilt of what

you have done ; but in the eyes both of God and of man you must stand acquitted of that worse, deliberate crime, which alone could bring on your name the infamy you speak of. How I should have acted had you been thus guilty, I do not know—it does not matter now ; but, as the case actually stands, I will not abandon you, and countenance, by doing so, the world's worst suspicions. We will stand or fall together."

"Oh ! Louisa, Louisa ! how little have I deserved this from you—I, who deserted you in your need ! But I am not yet so utterly perverted, so selfish, as to accept such a sacrifice."

"Do not speak of it as such, dearest ; it is no sacrifice—indeed it is not. The few friends I have, know me well enough, I trust, to feel sure that I would not do any thing that could really bring a stain upon my name, and they will not desert me because I have refused to desert you. We have always been sisters in heart ; we will now live as sisters in one home, and be no more divided."

Ellen threw herself into her friend's arms, and wept passionately : they were the first tears she had shed. There was a balm none could conceive but those whose affections have been crushed, trampled upon like hers, in those words of heartfelt affection. Till now, a sort of indistinct fear of Louisa's loftiness of principle and unbending integrity had made her shrink, with a more acute sense of shame, from her than from any other. Now that fear was lost in the conviction of her generous, unchanged affection ; and there was luxury in those tears, shed on the bosom of a true friend—to her, who, for so long, had been forced to lock up every *feeling in the silence and secrecy of her own heart.*

She did not attempt to make any further objections to Louisa's plan ; and it was settled between them that they should remove to Hampstead the next day.

There was one gnawing wish, which had, ever since the recovery of her consciousness, haunted Ellen day and night—the longing to see her child once more. She had, whilst yet too weak to hold a pen herself, made Louisa write in her name to Lord Caldwell, intreating him to allow the child to be brought to her, but he had peremptorily refused, without giving a reason. As soon as she was able, she had written to him herself ; and that letter was the strongest proof how completely her former haughty, passionate spirit was subdued. She wrote in a tone of humble, heart-broken entreaty, without striving to palliate her guilt, without uttering a reproach on the base treachery which had been the first cause of it. She bowed uncomplainingly to his decree of separation, but prayed that at least her child might not be wholly taken from her. She, the mother, who had given it life, after long agonies, at the risk of her own, sued, as a boon, at the hands of the father, who despised it, to be allowed to look once on the face of her child.

The letter was so unlike her former self, that Lord Caldwell treated it as a masterpiece of hypocrisy. He sneeringly answered, that the affection of the mother, who had wilfully deserted her child, was somewhat hypothetical, and such a mother was certainly not fit to be trusted with the care of it.

“How cruel !” exclaimed Louisa, indignantly, as she read the note which Ellen had put into her hand.

"No; he is right," said Ellen, in a choked voice. "I did desert her; I am not worthy to be a mother."

And this thought was the bitterest drop in the already overflowing cup. Still, she clung, with unutterable yearning, to the hope of seeing her child once more. It seemed to occupy her whole soul, to the exclusion of every other feeling; and now, that she was on the eve of leaving town, it increased so strongly upon her, that she determined to gratify it at whatever cost.

The morning that they were to remove to Hampstead, she chose a moment, when Louisa was busily engaged with domestic arrangements, to escape from the house, leaving word with the maid-servant that she should soon return. Again she found herself alone, making her way along the crowded Strand, as on that fatal evening of her flight. Then she was flying from her home; now she was returning towards it; but how had every thing changed since then! The recollections which crowded on her mind were not calculated to give additional strength to her weak and trembling frame, and she was soon forced to call a hackney-coach, from utter inability to proceed on foot. Engrossed as her mind was, habit was still so powerful as to make her shrink, with disgust, into a corner of the dirty straw-littered vehicle; for to her, so delicately bred, ever used to the most luxurious equipage, a hackney-coach was a strange and revolting novelty. When however, she got out in Grosvenor Square, within a few paces of Lord Caldwell's house, she almost wished herself in it again. Her limbs trembled, her eyes were dim; there was the home whose doors, a fortnight ago, would have been thrown wide open to receive her, and from which now she was a dis-

honoured exile, the home of her child, which she dared not enter. She drew her crape veil closely over her face, and leant against the area railings till she could gain strength to stand. She had come in the feeble hope of seeing her, when the nurse took her out as usual for her daily airing; and she watched and watched long hours, as it seemed to her, in vain for their appearance.

The little strength she had was already fast failing her, and she was beginning to feel that, if she wished to reach home at all, she must return quickly; when at length the door on which her eyes had been fixed opened, and the nurse, carrying the child, descended the steps. Ellen sprang forward, and then stopped suddenly, as she remembered that even her own menial might flout at her disgrace. But maternal love was stronger than the fear of shame; she advanced again, and overtook the nurse, as she turned down towards the Square. A covering was over the child's face.

"Let me see it—let me look at it," exclaimed she, wildly, laying her hand on the woman's arm.

The nurse looked up in astonishment at the figure, clad in the deepest mourning, who thus strangely accosted her. She started back as Ellen threw up her veil, and clasped her hands imploringly, as if to act the prayer she could not utter.

"Is it you, my lady? Lord bless me!" exclaimed the nurse, evidently at a loss, in her surprise, to know what tone she ought to assume.

"Hush!" said Ellen, putting gold into her hand. "Only let me look upon my child."

"Not here; this is too public a place," replied the woman, as she hurried on towards the Square.

Ellen followed, and they were soon safe from observation, beneath one of the spreading clumps of trees.

"My child!" repeated Ellen, holding out her arms; "give it to me for one moment. I cannot run away with it here, you know," added she, answering the nurse's half-suspicious look.

The woman placed it in her arms—those arms which had so asked to hold it once more, and for the time all other fear and sorrow were forgotten. Once she looked towards the gate of the Square, when it opened to admit another party, and, like lightning, the wild thought of flying with her infant crossed her brain. Was it not her own—had she not brought it into being at the peril of her own life? Who had such right to it as she had? The iron gate closed, and was locked again—she felt the madness of her passing thought.

The nurse had stood in silence, watching her, and now warned her that she dared not leave the child with her any longer. Ellen remembered, too, that Louisa would be waiting for her, and would be alarmed at her prolonged absence, and with desperate resolution she placed again the still sleeping infant in the nurse's arms.

"Oh, be careful of her—watch over her," murmured she, in scarcely articulate voice.

"That I will, for your sake, as well as for the darling child's own," said the nurse, with tears in her eyes. "And, my lady, I cannot take this gold; I'm not such a brute as to want to be paid for letting a mother see her own child, and, whatever else they may say of you, you've always been a good mother; and would never have left it, I'm sure, if you had not been driven."

Ellen thanked the blunt, kind-hearted woman, with a look of such humble gratitude as made her tears fairly overflow; and with one more fervent blessing on her child, she slowly turned away, and bent her steps towards home.

Mrs. Allen and Louisa were waiting in painful anxiety for her return, and were too happy to see her to ask any questions concerning her absence, which her state of exhaustion would have made it difficult for her to answer. A trying scene still awaited her in the parting with Mrs. Allen. She attempted, in a faltering voice, to say how deeply she had felt the kindness—the forbearance of one to whom she had caused so much sorrow. But Mrs. Allen stopped her at once. She folded her in her arms, and fervently blessed her; then gave her up to Louisa, who hurried her down stairs into the carriage. Ellen felt, as they drove from the door, that the last link which connected her fate with Edward Annesley's was now broken.

CHAPTER XXII.

“What frenzy on thy reason stole?
What spells unsinew'd thy determined soul?
Is this the man in freedom's cause approv'd?
The man so great, so honour'd, so belov'd?
This patient slave by tinsel chains allur'd?
This wretched suitor for a boon abjur'd?
This Curio, hated and despised by all,
Who fell himself to work his country's fall?”

AKENSIDE.

During the last few weeks, Reginald had scarcely seen Louisa. She had been so completely engrossed with the care of her friend, and the anxiety to save Mrs. Allen, as much as possible, from the trouble and annoyance of such an addition to her family, that a few minutes at a time was as much as she could spare to Reginald; and, during this temporary privation, the latter awoke to the consciousness that her society had again become dearer to him than all earthly things beside; and that the feelings he had deemed so carefully eradicated, were once more become as ardent and strong as they had ever been. Her absence created a void which made the crowded metropolis seem a wilderness to him, and he felt that equally drear and cheerless would be the whole course of life, if she were not by his side—if they trod not their ap-

pointed path together. The days were past when he mourned over himself, that he was incapable of loving as of yore; now his only fear was, lest she should still be insensible to his love; lest the calm, sisterly affection she showed him, so unreservedly, and evidently without a thought of any warmer feeling, should never be converted into that which alone he felt could constitute his happiness. Other doubts and fears arose also, which agitated him more painfully, at the recollection of his former rival; and he was uncertain of the extent of the power he might have exercised over Louisa's affections, or how far he was now forgotten. That she should lightly change he knew was impossible, and he trembled to think that the dream of his whole existence might prove vain at last.

To Edward Annesley, who was now come back to town, he confided his hopes and fears; and though the latter did not discourage him, he urged him to wait. He knew Louisa had suffered much, and that time alone can work a change in feelings thus stamped into the soul. Reginald acquiesced in the wisdom of this advice, and meanwhile strengthened his powers of forbearance by frequent visits to the cottage at Hampstead, where his presence was as welcome as he could desire. Even poor Ellen would wear a smile at his approach, for though dead to all enjoyment herself, she felt how much Louisa must need some society, to relieve her weary task of comforting one, for whom there could be henceforth no comfort, and she would frequently plead a wish to be alone, or a desire to lie down and rest for a little while; or urge them to take a long walk, in which she was herself unable to accompany them, that they might be left

to the full enjoyment of each other's society; and truly did Louisa enjoy those hours of pleasant converse with her earliest friend, and she yielded herself freely and unreservedly to the happiness of that companionship of which she had been so long deprived.

Thus several weeks passed away. Reginald had remained in town, during the recess, for the purpose of being near Louisa, but he had promised to spend a fortnight with Sir Robert Fullerton before the opening of the session, and, accordingly, though *à contre-cœur*, he departed for Yorkshire, and only returned for the meeting of parliament, which, on account of a great press of business, took place in January.

It was a moment of very great political interest; but it will be necessary, to understand the events in which Reginald was to take a prominent part, that we should rapidly glance over the occurrences which marked the close of the last session. As regards Reginald himself, on his first return to England, had he voted for the ministers, a fair prospect of promotion would probably have been opened to him, but they had at that time been joined by some of the most ultra of their party, with whom his political creed was totally at variance, and he unhesitatingly joined the opposition, and took an active part in their endeavours to drive their opponents from office.

One after another, however, these endeavours failed; and when parliament broke up, the ministers were stronger than ever, and the other party apparently utterly hopeless. Nor was this the opinion of the public only, but of the leading men on both sides, of Lord Caldwell amongst the rest,

who thus saw his hopes of power once more frustrated and cast to the ground, almost without a chance of redemption.

Had this defeat happened some months before, his rage and disappointment would have known no bounds, but in his long-sighted wisdom, he had provided for the evil day, and now, after much secret negotiation with the government, he finally consented to join them for the rich reward of an earldom, and one of the highest offices of the state. His former friends had been disgusted for some time with his lukewarmness in the cause, and his silence during the stormy debates which had decided their fate; but when, just before the opening of parliament, some changes were announced in the ministry, and Lord Caldwell's apostacy became publicly known, their contempt and indignation were general.

But Lord Caldwell valued the applause of the world only so far as it furthered his private designs; and as he assumed his new title, and entered upon his new office, wearing "his blushing honours thick upon him," he laughed to scorn the impotent anger of those whom he had forsaken in their need.

The most wary, however, will at times overreach their mark, and Lord Caldwell proved, in this instance, his ignorance of the real strength of the party he had so shamelessly deserted, and who, in the hour of utmost peril, gathered up all their energies for a last struggle. It was understood, that, at the very outset of the session, ministers had determined to bring forward a long contested measure, which they now never doubted of carrying triumphantly through both houses. The very

boldness of the intention roused the dormant opposition of many, who from mere despondency would have been silent on any other occasion, and the determination to resist the attempt of the government was strong and united. Reginald was among the most indefatigable in preparing for the contest, and he soon became one of the most dreaded members of the opposition. It was not vainly that he had rejoiced in the consciousness of power, that power of eloquence which bestows the highest and most irresistible influence which man can exercise over his fellow men. Never scarcely had a young speaker commanded such attention as that which waited on his words, whenever he rose to speak; it seemed as if some of the master spirits, who had been wont of yore to cast the spell of their genius over that assembly, had risen from their long sleep, to plead there again, and his reputation grew with every fresh exertion. The present crisis taxed his strength to the utmost; but, after the first night's debate, though the question was still undecided, the hopes of triumph seemed so bright, that he scarcely felt he had made any effort.

Very different were the feelings of Lord Caldwell on reading the report the next morning. He crushed the paper in his hands, and gnashed his teeth with rage, as the possibility of defeat flashed upon him. That he should have allied himself at such a moment to a falling party, was a thought to madden a man, who had trodden all his life the crooked paths of policy, and discovered, when too late, that the straight road would have led him to triumph. His conscience almost smote him; he could have exclaimed with Talleyrand, "*C'est pire qu'un crime, c'est une faute!*" and such a mistake

created more remorse in his soul than any crime could have done. He felt himself an object of distrust to all parties, and knew not, during that long day of anxious suspense, where to seek relief.

His new friends were occupied with their own fears, and if they thought of him, it was as the rash adviser who had plunged them into danger; and his old associates, those with whom he had walked hand in hand during his toilsome ascent to fame, were triumphing in his defeat. Had he been able himself to take an active part in the debate, his anxiety would have been less intense. The most arduous exertion is relaxation to the powerless spectator of the struggle which is to crown or crush all his hopes, and he would have given worlds for the privilege of speaking that night in the House of Commons: that was impossible, but all that was in his power he did. He called on every member who were to speak on the ministerial side, pointed out the errors of previous arguments, furnished them with new ones, exposed the fallacies that had escaped rival speakers, tried to infuse his own energy into those who, on the first appearance of defeat, were willing to despond; in short, after a day of restless agitation, he had worked himself up to such a pitch of excitement, that, on returning home, he felt decided symptoms of illness, which forced him to renounce his intention of going down to the House to hear the debate.

Vain, however, were all attempts to rest; he could not wait till morning to hear the result which he knew would decide his political existence; and, springing from his feverish couch, and taking a strong dose of opium to enable him to bear the ex-

ertion, he drove down to Westminster, and arrived just as the debate was at its height. It lasted many hours, and was ably sustained on both sides. Reginald surpassed himself; and Lord Caldwell could have ground him to powder as he spoke, whilst he detected or fancied weakness in all that was uttered by his own party. At a late hour the house divided; the ministry were defeated by a large majority, and Lord Caldwell dragged himself to his carriage, and was lifted from it insensible and bathed in blood when it reached his own door.

The aspiring politician could not stand the shock which overthrew his proud hopes; and the heart, in which few human feelings save daring ambition had survived, seemed literally to have burst in the struggle. When medical assistance was summoned, he was found to have broken a blood-vessel; and, when his late colleagues tendered their resignation, it seemed probable that the forced and stern resignation of death would shortly terminate his career.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Were I crowned the most imperial monarch
Thereof most worthy;—were I the fairest youth
That ever made eye swerve; had force and knowledge
More than was ever man's, I would not prize them
Without her love; for her employ them all—
Commend them, and condemn them to her service,
Or to their own perdition."

Winter's Tale.

Louisa took care the news of Lord Caldwell's danger should not reach Ellen through the medium of the public papers. She broke it to her as gently as possible; and, when she saw Ellen's sudden change of colour, she was glad that she had used this caution. She hastily rose to assist her, thinking, as she sank back in her chair, that she was going to faint; but Ellen gently put her away.

"I am not ill; do not be frightened, dear Louisa; only leave me for a little while; I want to be alone—to be quiet...."

Louisa did not resist her wish; her returning colour reassured her; and she felt that, at such a moment, there must be feelings struggling in her heart which could be bared to no human eye, even to hers; and, affectionately kissing her forehead, she left the room. On the stairs she met old Sarah coming to tell her that Mr. Talbot was below, and

impatiently asking for her ; and she hastened down to see him.

They had not met since his return from Yorkshire, for he had been unable to snatch time to pay her a visit ; but, in the flush of triumph—in the proudest moment of his life, his first thought was of her ; and, when he received a note from her, warmly congratulating him on his brilliant success, and on his appointment to an honourable post under the new ministry, he determined to answer it in person. All things seemed bright and hopeful to him then, and he would not allow a doubt to cloud his joy. Louisa would be his ; she could not but listen to the avowal of his long-cherished love, and accept the devotion of his whole life, and he would not delay another hour the decision of his fate ; the bright vision of his youth was all but realised — fame, honour, and the applause of his country were his ; all had come to pass even as he had pictured it in youth's glowing fancy ; her love alone was wanting to crown his fondest and proudest hopes, and to sue for that love he now hastened to seek her.

Anxiously did he watch her countenance as she entered the room, and returned his unusually warm greeting ; and, perhaps, allowing his wish to be father to his thought, he fancied he perceived something different in her manner from what it had been before — a shade of consciousness, a half fear of meeting his glance ; and his heart beat high at the thought. They were alone — every thing seemed favourable to his wishes, and in another moment his long silence was broken.

Before she had half finished her congratulations, or expressed her warm sympathy in all that had

passed since they met, he had interrupted her, and had poured out the confession of his long repressed love, and, in the glowing language of passion, told her how insufficient were all these worldly honours to his happiness—how utterly cold and valueless would be to him Ambition's proudest triumphs, Fame's brightest laurels, without her affection.

"Louisa, dearest Louisa, do not seek to interrupt me," he said, seeing her, when her first surprise was over, about to speak: "I have been silent too long, for this is no love of yesterday. Years ago, when our positions were different, and the world smiled upon you, whilst I had my toilsome way to make, I shrank from avowing what I now dare avow—that the possession of this dear hand alone can confer happiness upon me, and the proudest joy of this hour of triumph is that I can now lay a richer offering at your feet. Yes, Louisa! when you thought me cold and heartless, it was that my heart was too full to speak other words, and too proud to utter these, when I thought they would be scorned for another's sake; but, though unuttered, they dwelt not the less in my inmost soul; and when despised, absent, through toil and success, in joy and sorrow, I have loved you still. My earliest boyish affection, and the only passion of my manhood, have been devoted to you."

"Reginald, I entreat you....."

"No, Louisa! you must hear me now. The torrent so long pent up within my breast has burst its barriers at last, and no human power can bid it flow back. You must hear and decide now whether we part again, for I am unable longer to wear this cold mask of friendship, or from this

day date a new existence, and be to each other more, far more, than we ever yet have been. I can no longer sit in silence beside you, though it would mock the power of words to tell you all I feel, how entirely and how unreservedly my whole soul is yours. Louisa, do not turn coldly from me; you have borne with my waywardness, my violence, my injustice even; now you have the secret of it all. For this did I exclude myself from your presence when I saw my rival's power; for this did I become an exile; and by this was I driven almost to madness when your father's death, and your silence, severed every outward tie between us. I awoke to the duty of conquering my feelings for one whom I believed to be the happy wife of another. I strove hard, and thought I had conquered; but when I found myself again in your presence, I felt that my efforts had been vain, and I dared then to open my heart to hope: tell me, have I hoped too much?"

Since her last ineffectual attempt to interrupt him, Louisa had sat with her face concealed, and she still remained silent after he had finished speaking. Alarmed at this, he gently attempted to remove her hands.

"Louisa, my own beloved, speak to me!—or must I think that such words from me have power only to terrify you? Forgive me for this abrupt declaration; perhaps it should have been longer delayed; but you know not what it is to have one thought stirring unceasingly within, and not to dare give it utterance. Oh, Louisa! is it possible that this can have surprised you? or do you scorn the love I thus offer you?" he cried, more vehemently.

"Scorn!" exclaimed Louisa, raising her head

and turning towards him her deadly pale countenance. "Reginald, you do not know me yet! I thank you. I feel deeply grateful. I wish I could....." Here her voice was choked, and turning away her face again, she said, almost inaudibly, "What can a blighted heart have to give in reward for such affection as yours?"

"Say not that your heart is blighted, Louisa; it will expand and revive again, under the influence of happy affection. Let it only be mine to raise and cheer you, to make you forget that you ever knew care or sorrow."

"Reginald, it cannot be. You know not what you ask: you yourself would reproach me for giving you only the last feeble drops, when the first main torrent of feeling was lavished upon another; you yourself would reproach me. No, go on your way in peace, and if we must part, Heaven bless you, till we can meet again in calmer hours, when youth's stormy passions are hushed."

"Louisa, I will not obey you; I cannot consent to leave you. Look upon the past as a troubled dream, not as a blight on your young life."

"I would to God that the past might thus be forgotten: but it was a fearful struggle. There are things which never.... I did not think now to speak of this," she continued, in an agitated voice, whilst a crimson flush spread over her face and throat; "but it is right that you should hear, —I owe it to you to be open with you now. You think that it was merely a vain, girlish fancy which blinded me for a time, and, no doubt, such might pass away and leave no trace; but no, it was a deeper, intenser feeling which sprang up in my heart, and I yielded my whole soul to the infatu-

ation; and when it became necessary to struggle with it, it was a struggle for life or death! You know, Reginald, if I loved my father," she proceeded, in a hollow tone, "yet by his deathbed, with his farewell words sounding in my ears, my thoughts were with *him*. In my poverty, in my trials, separation from *him*, tidings of *his* errors were my greatest sorrows; and if God gave me strength to bear it and live, if now the storm is past, and I can think of him calmly, and pronounce his name like any common thing, yet is my life withered; the freshness of youth passed away in that fierce struggle; and could you, in reward for the affection of years, be satisfied with the love a heart thus exhausted can have to give?"

Reginald was silent for a moment; the passionate earnestness of her manner, so unlike her usual calm demeanour, the tone which spoke so plainly the depth of her past suffering, awed him; whilst, for an instant, the worst passions of his nature were roused at hearing her speak thus ever of her past feelings for his long hated rival; but he looked at her again, as she sat confused, trembling, sinking within herself with shame for the words which she had spoken in her excitement, and which now seemed to have wounded every feeling of feminine delicacy; and he felt humbled in her humiliation, and anxious only to efface the painful impression, to show that he felt her generous intention in speaking thus openly to him.

"Yes, dearest," he exclaimed, answering her last words; "yes, even such from you shall be more precious to me than the richest, fullest treasure of another's love; and do not fear that one word of reproach shall ever escape my lips. Your

past feelings and sorrows shall be holy in my sight. I ask only the right to cherish and protect you; the right to devote to you openly my future existence, as the past has been devoted to you in secret."

"That is a poor right," murmured Louisa, "when—when your warm feelings can never be returned."

"Do not say so; I implore you, do not say so. Is it so hard a thing to pay with love a heart that loves you so truly? Have we not been dear to each other from childhood? Then why say you cannot love me now? Are you not glad when I am by you? Do you not regret my absence? Have not your own dear lips told me so again and again? Then why say you cannot love me? I ask no more; it shall be my study henceforth to teach you to love me as I would be loved, and the wild dream of other days will be forgotten."

As he spoke these words in a low, earnest voice trembling with emotion, Louisa murmured some almost inarticulate sounds; and, seeing her agitation, he passed his arm round her, and gently raising her from her drooping position, he drew her towards him.

"Speak to me one word, dearest; tell me that I interpret your tears aright."

"Reginald," she said, at length, extricating herself from his hold, "I am not insensible to your affection; you know it; but you must give me time. This is sudden. I had blinded myself to your feelings; I thought—I could never again....."

"I will not press you, dearest; you have my sacred promise that I will give you as much time

as you desire. I can bear to wait now; such a moment as this repays whole years of misery. Let me but hope—let me but see you smile upon my devotion, and I will not inquire what time it may still need to efface old recollections. Love like mine can trust to its own power; only say you will reward it at last—that you will *try* to love me.”

Louisa could not speak, but, after some moments' hesitation, she laid her hand in his.

“It is enough,” he said, as he pressed it fervently to his lips, “and God bless you for it! Now let the world frown or smile, no earthly power can take my happiness from me; my life is in your hand alone.”

Louisa was completely overcome, and there was a long pause; for he was gazing with trembling delight on her agitation.

“Reginald,” she said at length, when she had recovered some calmness, “it is a solemn thing you have done this day. Oh, may it not prove to have been too rash! You have decided our future fate; God grant you may never repent it! God grant me the power to reward your generous confidence as it deserves!”

Reginald's passionate words—his rapturous thanks for the consent she had yielded to his wishes—proved that he had no fear of ever repenting that day's decision; and he strove to impart his confidence to her.

“I will try to believe you,” she said, in a low voice, which the brightening ray which lighted up her countenance, as she lifted up her eyes for a moment to his, told that that belief was already *working its cheering effects* upon her heart. To

Reginald, this moment was one of intense joy; and as he sat by her side, and she listened to his impassioned tale of past suffering and future delight, all fears and jealousies were forgotten, and he scarcely thought her consent to their immediate union could have added to his happiness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

—————"A te son moglie,
Per te son madre—sci oppresso—non posso
Ne vacillar deggio."

ALFIERI.

Ellen had been watching anxiously for Reginald's departure, and she entered the room immediately after he was gone. For once, her presence was unwelcome to Louisa, who had never felt the want of solitude so much as at this moment. But the first glance at Ellen's countenance, which was deadly pale, and working with the effort to suppress all signs of emotion, made her forget herself and her own feelings, and she anxiously inquired what was the matter, whether Ellen had received any worse tidings.

"No, I have heard nothing more," replied Ellen; "I am only come to tell you that I have determined on going immediately to town to Lord Caldwell."

"To Lord Caldwell! Ellen, are you mad? What can have induced you to form such a resolution?"

"I am his wife—he is ill, perhaps dying; my place is beside him."

"But—after what has passed, are you called upon to take such a step? If he should refuse to

admit you, you will only have exposed yourself to unnecessary humiliation."

"Humiliation!" said Ellen, with a faint smile; "I have drank that cup to the dregs. I cannot be humbled more than I am, and I shall be happier, whatever be the consequence, in feeling that I have for once done what was right. Besides, I need fear no rejection from him, since you yourself told me he was unconscious of every thing."

"But, dearest Ellen, you have not strength for such a task."

"Yes, yes, I have strength enough. I must go, Louisa; do not attempt to dissuade me."

It was in vain that Louisa still remonstrated. For once, Ellen was not to be swayed by argument or persuasion; she seemed to feel as if, by going to her husband now, she should atone in some measure for her former flight. No thought of his guilt towards her seemed to enter her mind. It was a remarkable circumstance, that, from the first hour of returning consciousness after her illness, Ellen had scarcely alluded to, scarcely seemed to remember, the base treachery to which she had fallen a victim. In her deep self-abasement, the sense of her own guilt seemed to exclude all thought of the guilt of others. And so was it now; she seemed to think of Lord Caldwell only as the husband whom she had abandoned, the father of her child; and the tears rose to Louisa's eyes as she marked how the once proud and bitter spirit was softened and subdued. She ceased, at last, her efforts to change Ellen's resolution. She felt that Ellen might be right, and that, at all events, she would be happier in fulfilling what she considered an urgent duty, than in remaining in feverish anxiety

where she was. She contented herself with insisting on accompanying her to town, to see her safely re-established in her husband's house, or, if she were prevented accomplishing her purpose, to bring her back again to the cottage. In less than an hour after Reginald's departure, the two friends were on their way to town.

As the carriage stopped at Lord Caldwell's door, Ellen turned very pale, and was evidently so strongly agitated, that her friend once more urged her to renounce the undertaking, and to return home. But she quickly regained her self-possession, and, silencing Louisa's entreaties, she entered the house with a firm step. The servants received her with customary deference, but with evident uncertainty as to the manner in which she ought to be regarded. Lord Caldwell had never mentioned her name since the day she left the house, and they were at a loss to know how to conduct themselves towards her. At that moment, however, Ellen seemed insensible to the keen sense of shame which usually made her shrink from every glance. Once only, as she met the eyes of the porter and the footmen fixed on her with wondering curiosity, the blood rushed to her face, and suffused her whole skin with a crimson flush; but it almost instantly passed away, and left her pale and composed as before.

Her anxious inquiries concerning her husband's state were answered by his own valet, who happened to cross the hall at that moment. "His lordship was much the same as yesterday. He had not spoken, and remained quite insensible to everything."

"If your ladyship wishes for any more particulars," added the man, "Dr. L. is in the house."

This was just what Ellen wished. She sent immediately to request him to come and speak to her, and meanwhile, to escape the curious gaze of the servants, she entered the dining-room. Louisa followed her in silence, remarking, with astonishment, her self-command and quiet decision of manner, so unlike anything she had ever seen before in that child of impulse; and even in that anxious moment, she rejoiced to see how adversity had already done its gracious work in her.

Dr. L. did not immediately obey Lady Caldwell's summons, but when he did come, the warmth of his greeting made up for his delay. He knew little of her previous history, beyond the report generally current in the world, that she had been driven from her husband's house by his ill-usage, and that she had since lived in the most complete retirement with Miss Conway, whose friendship was, of itself, a sufficient passport to Dr. L.'s good opinion.

"I shall be delighted to establish you as Lord Caldwell's head nurse," was his reply, when Ellen had stated the purpose for which she came. "I am always glad when my patients are married; a good wife often does more for them than a good doctor, and this is a case in which care and watchfulness are likely to be of more avail than medicine."

"Thank God, I came!" exclaimed Ellen, in a low voice; "now, may I go to him at once?"

"As soon as you please, if you feel that you can command yourself. It is a trying scene—I warn you that you will find a fearful change."

"I am quite prepared," replied Ellen, steadily.

Louisa was now obliged to take leave of her friend; before she went, she entreated Dr. L. to watch over her—and to prevent her over-exerting herself—which he promised to do; and after once more affectionately embracing her, she sorrowfully returned to the carriage, to muse in the solitude she had so anxiously wished for a few hours ago, on the occurrences of that eventful day; whilst Ellen followed Dr. L. into her husband's room, and took up her station by his sick bed.

Who shall tell what strange and unutterable feelings stirred in Ellen's heart, as she watched through that long night, in silence and solitude, beside her husband's couch? That husband who had blighted her young life by his falsehood and treachery, and then had despised and trampled upon his victim—who had relentlessly cast her from his home, separated her from her child, heaped scorn and humiliation upon her, till her spirit was crushed, her heart well-nigh broken, in punishment of one act of desperation to which his own guilt had driven her—lay before her, prostrate, helpless, scarcely more than a breathing corpse, on that bed which, in a few hours, might be the bed of death. Once, as she gazed on his livid and marble features, the thought that his death would set her free, that nothing then would divide her from Edward, flashed across her mind, and a wild thrill of joy ran through her whole frame. But she drove the thought from her with a shuddering fear, and, throwing herself on her knees, she prayed with passionate earnestness for strength in that hour of trial—strength against herself, against the temptation of her own dark thoughts. Many hours of that long night were thus spent in pre

and that silent room might have seemed a holy place in the sight of angels, whilst a human heart wrestled there, in the strength of humility and faith, against its own wild passions, and came out pure and victorious from the conflict.

For many days and nights Ellen scarcely left her husband's room; and never did mother watch over her child with more entire and unwearied devotion than she did, during that time, over Lord Caldwell. So sternly did she fulfil the task she had appointed to herself, that it was only during the few moments in which Dr. L. forced her away from her post to take the food and rest necessary to support her strength, that she allowed herself to see her child. Then she would fly to the nursery; and fatigue, anxiety, sorrow, were all forgotten, as she clasped her infant in her arms, and gazed, with love unspeakable, on that little face, which had now learnt to smile upon her in return. There seemed life and strength in that smile to the mother's heart; for when the allotted period of her absence was over, she would return to her station beside her husband, with a lighter step and a brighter countenance, and seemed unconscious that she had had no other refreshment.

At length Lord Caldwell was pronounced out of danger. When Dr. L. announced his safety to Ellen, he added—

“You may take the merit of this cure to yourself, my dear Lady Caldwell, for I frankly acknowledge, that without your incessant care and watchfulness, I could not have saved him. Next to God, he owes his life to you.”

“God bless you for saying so!” exclaimed Ellen. “Now I can leave him in peace.”

"Leave him! what do you mean?"

"That now he is safe, I am no longer wanted here—I have no longer any right to be here;" added she, in a lower voice, "and I must go."

Dr. L. knew too little of the circumstances of Lord and Lady Caldwell's separation to feel himself entitled to remonstrate against this determination, and he could merely express his regret that his patient would be deprived of her valuable care during the trying time of his convalescence.

"At all events," said he, in conclusion, "I shall take care, as soon as Lord Caldwell is able to bear it, to let him know to whom he owes his life?"

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Ellen, eagerly, "he must never know it—he must never know that I have been in this house. Promise me that you will never tell him—that my stay here shall remain a secret to him, to every one."

"But how can it remain a secret, when all the servants know it?"

"I have bought their secrecy already—they will not betray me. Promise me, if you have any regard for me, not to betray me either."

Ellen's look and tone were so imploring, that Dr. L. could not resist them. Here again he was unable to judge of the motives which made her wish for secrecy, and he gave her the promise she required, satisfying himself with the reflection that one whom he had seen act so nobly till now must have some sufficient reason for the request she urged with so much earnestness.

Ellen's mind was set at rest by this promise. She had no fear now that her husband should think she had forced herself into his house, to trouble him by

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stead.

CHAPTER XXV.

" I have lived long enough : my may of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf :
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have ; but, in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep."

Macbeth.

" More need that there should be found one
To share remorse, and scorn, and solitude,
And all the ills that wait on those who do
The tasks of ruin in the world of life."

SHELLEY.

Lord Caldwell recovered from his illness, but his constitution was irremediably shattered. He rose from his bed of sickness an old man, broken in strength, weakened in mind. His clear and powerful intellect seemed darkened ; the resolute will, which had been one of his most striking characteristics, was subdued into fretful vacillation ; his buoyant energy had deserted him, but his mind retained all its restlessness ; and the activity which had now no outward object, turned upon itself, and became the instrument of his heaviest torture—the vulture unceasingly gnawing at his heart. And there was no rest—no solace for him, in heaven or earth. The object for which he had lived, towards which every energy and faculty of his *being had tended*, was suddenly taken from

him, and he was thrown back upon himself, to live objectless, if such life were possible; or, in his old age, when his energy and buoyancy of spirit were gone, to seek some new aim to live for.

The popular breath he had hung upon, and bought by years of constraint and duplicity, had shifted its direction, and now blew more strongly against him than it had ever done in his favour. He could not open a paper without finding obloquy, contempt, or, worse still, ridicule, heaped upon his name. His former party triumphed in the defeat of one, whom they denounced as an apostate from their ranks; the party he had joined cast him out as a base-born, treacherous intruder. Those who could agree in nothing else, agreed in vituperating him. He forbade that any papers should be allowed to come into the house; but he could not live without the daily bread of excitement he had so long been used to, and he soon countermanded the order. The fever of wounded pride was a thousand times preferable to the stagnation, the dead calm which left his mind more free to torture itself.

The bitterest thought of all was, that his own act had caused his ruin, and he cursed himself, not for having deserted the cause of truth—not for having sacrificed principle to the lowest, the most selfish ambition—but for having, in his mad haste to grasp the prize, forgotten to calculate the chances with sufficient wariness. It was the torture of hell to reflect that, if he had adhered but a few days longer to the party he had followed for thirty years, all that he had toiled for, lived for, bartered his soul for, had been his—honour, power, popularity, all had been at his feet; and now, he

ground his teeth, and drove his nails into the flesh of his clenched hands, as he thought of what *was*—as he looked round and felt himself a weak, deserted, despised old man!

One thing alone remained to him, the rank which had been the price of his apostacy. But what was rank without power—rank without a son to inherit it—rank, which the first act of its possessor had dishonoured for ever? Even in this shadow of consolation lay the sting of the adder.

As soon as he was able to move, Lord Caldwell left town. He could not endure to be seen in his altered state, in the scene of his former triumphs. The hoots of the populace, the sneers of enemies, the altered looks of quondam friends, were so many daggers to his soul; and he felt that he had lost the self-command, the self-reliance which would once have enabled him to face them all with calmness. None, however, should perceive this but himself, and he fled to the country. Other public men had found in their retirement peace and solace, why might not he? Lord Caldwell forgot that such men as these had kept their hearts pure, their minds open to perceptions of truth and beauty, even amidst the strife of the world. Nature had no solace for him. The keen habits of observation which he possessed had been exclusively employed in the detection of every dark spot—every seed of evil in men and things, which might be worked upon for his purposes, till he had lost the power of discerning or feeling what was good and beautiful. The light within him had been wilfully turned to darkness, and now how fearfully great was that darkness! His heart was *hardened against the influences of nature; to him*

she was lifeless—voiceless, for the sense which enables man to apprehend her, was dead within him.

He turned to books; he remembered that once, in his early youth, the thirst for knowledge had preceded the thirst for power. But, for too many years, books, and the knowledge they brought, had been to him, like every thing else, but the means of attaining the ends of selfish ambition, and now their interest was gone, the purer thirst could not be again revived. Like the habitual drunkard, who, though his throat is burning, his frame fevered, turns with loathing from the draught of pure water, Lord Caldwell turned from the deep well of knowledge, whose waters had become tasteless and insipid to him. Neither was there rest or solace to be found.

And now, in his desolation, arose thoughts of the wife whom his guilt had driven in madness from her home. In the long weary days of bodily pain and mental torture, when no comforter, no friend was near; when the careless, heartless services of menials aggravated the pain they attempted to alleviate, and the strong spirit was fainting beneath the sense of its loneliness; thoughts involuntarily arose of how different all would have seemed if *she* had been there. He remembered how he had seen her hanging over the sick bed of her child—how she had watched day and night with unwearied patience. Once, when he had been ill for a few days, just after their marriage, she had watched almost as unweariedly beside him, and she might have been beside him now, if he had not trampled upon her, maddened her, driven her to desperate flight, and then cast her from him, for

the desperation he had caused. As he sat, hour after hour, in his solitary and darkened room, chafing at the everlasting ticking of the time-piece, which seemed to mock his irritation, he thought, in spite of himself, how her voice would have filled that silent room with music—how her beauty would have gladdened it even as a light shining in a dark place.

One day he had been dwelling on these thoughts, and had risen from his chair, to seek, in bodily motion, some solace for his mental restlessness; he had been pacing slowly up and down, his irritability increased by the sense of his own weakness, when, as he stopped to rest for a moment, near one of the windows, he saw the nurse walking in the garden, with the baby in her arms. The child was in high good humour, and was crowing in the nurse's face. Till that moment Lord Caldwell had almost forgotten its existence, and it was with a strange sensation of pleasure that he thought of it now. In his utter loneliness, this child—that poor, despised child—suddenly became precious in his eyes; it was something left to him to care for, to break the blank of his solitude.

He sent for her, and, as he took her in his arms, and kissed her soft cheek, for the first time he rejoiced that he was a father. The child, however, was frightened at the caresses of a stranger, and at his rough and awkward handling, and she set up a loud cry. He tried to soothe her, whilst the nurse looked on in astonishment; but she would not be soothed, and he angrily sent her away. Yet, when she was gone, the silence of the room seemed more dead, more intolerable than before.

The next day he sent for her again. Any thing

even her cries, were better than that oppressive stillness. This time he took care to be more gentle, and the child seemed to have forgotten her fear, and smiled in his face. The proud man's heart was humbled by his desolation, and he felt almost thankful to his poor infant for that smile; there were few beings in the world who smiled upon him now; and he kissed that little laughing face, with more affection, than a few months ago he would have thought it possible for him to feel towards any living thing.

"Ah! if my lady could see that, it would do her heart good," said the nurse, almost involuntarily. Lord Caldwell turned quickly round, and asked her what she meant. "Only that it was always a great trouble to my lady to see how little your lordship cared for your poor little baby, which she doated on so," answered the woman, boldly; "it weighed terribly upon her mind, poor thing, and I think it had something to do with her going off as she did."

"I recommend you not to think any thing at all about the matter, or, at all events, to keep your thoughts to yourself. As you value your place, never mention her to me again. Never mention her to this child; she shall be forgotten, as if she had never existed."

"She did not forget you, though, in your time of need," muttered the nurse, whose heart had been won by Ellen's devotedness to her child.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Lord Caldwell, in a voice which made her wish that she had not gone so far.

It was too late to recede, however, and, with some hesitation, and a great deal of circumlocution,

she told how Ellen had come to him the moment she heard of his illness, and how unweariedly and devotedly she had nursed him, and only left him when he was out of danger.

"A very good story, indeed," said Lord Caldwell, with a sneer, when she ceased speaking; "and, of course, Lady Caldwell bribed you to tell it, that I might feel myself bound in gratitude to take her back again; but I am not to be deceived quite so easily as you and she seem to think."

"Nobody is trying to deceive you, my lord," said the nurse, roused to indignation, by his scornful tone. "My lady is above bribing any one to tell a falsehood, and I hope I am above being bribed. If your lordship does not believe me, you may ask your lordship's own man, Mr. Johnson, and all the other servants; they'll all tell you the same story; and so would Dr. L., if he were here."

"But if this is true, how does it happen that I never heard of it till now—that you have all kept it such a profound secret?"

"Because it was my lady's wish that it should be kept secret. She made us all promise never to mention it to your lordship, or to any one. I should not have told you now, but that it came out in spite of myself, when you talked of forgetting her."

Lord Caldwell was still by no means satisfied. He sent for Johnson and the other servants, and questioned them separately, and their evidence amply corroborated that of the nurse. Still the thought that Ellen might have bribed them, made him hesitate in his belief, and he wrote to Dr. L., *telling him what he had heard, and request-*

ing to know the whole truth of the case. Dr. L.'s answer arrived by return of post, and was as full and circumstantial as Lord Caldwell could desire. After bearing the most ample witness to Ellen's noble conduct and unwearied devotion, he concluded by repeating what he had before said to her, that nothing but her incessant care could have saved his lordship's life, and that he rejoiced that the time was come at last when he could unburden his conscience, by giving her the credit she had so amply deserved.

Lord Caldwell read this letter with strong and conflicting emotions. He could no longer doubt the story of Ellen's generous devotion. It was to her, then—to her whom he had wronged and despised—that he owed his life; when he lay prostrate, and helpless, and deserted, she alone had stood by him; and when, by her exertions, she had saved him, she had refused even to humble him by the knowledge of her generosity. In spite of himself, Lord Caldwell was deeply moved; but there was humiliation in this very feeling of gratitude towards one whom he had so long scorned and hated. It was unpleasant to be forced to admire and reverence her, and it made the aspect of his own guilt towards her appear more hideous still. For a moment he had thought of writing to her, acknowledging his debt of gratitude, and asking her once more to take her place in his house: but he quickly drove the thought away; there was too much humiliation involved in it; and he satisfied his conscience by resolving to do her every justice but that.

Yet, as day after day wore wearily away, and the sense of loneliness, the stagnation of life, be-

came more and more oppressive, the thought which he had so hastily thrust from him often returned in spite of himself, and gradually assumed shape and distinctness. The objections which pride, remorse, revenge, suggested in turn, gave way one by one. Selfishness was more powerful than them all, and selfishness whispered that Ellen's presence could alone brighten that dreary solitude, or Ellen's companionship soothe and cheer those weary hours of pain and restlessness. She who had watched so tenderly by his bed of sickness, would surely watch over him now; and with his wife and child to gladden his home, his miserable old age would be, at least, less desolate. Under the influence of these feelings, he at length, after much hesitation, resolved on writing to Ellen, and asking her to return to him. He told her of the manner in which he had become acquainted with her generous conduct during his illness, and that, whatever just indignation he might have felt at her flight, he could not but forget it now, in his gratitude for the exertions which had saved his life.

"If you are willing to return to me again," he wrote to her, "I shall gladly receive you as my wife, and restore you to your rank and position in society. I make but one condition—that the past be never mentioned between us. I will not deny that there is much in that past; I wish you to forget and forgive; and you will acknowledge that I have some things on my side to forgive also. Let us mutually bury it in oblivion—consider it as if it had never been. On this condition my house and heart are open to you, and I will restore to you, with joy, your privileges as a wife and mother; but, if you cannot accede to it, if you refuse to re-

turn to my house, remember that, in renouncing me, you must renounce your child also; for I will never allow my daughter to be entrusted to the care of one dishonoured in the eyes of the world by separation from her husband."

This letter reached Ellen as she sat alone with Louisa in their little drawing-room, talking, as usual, of Reginald. The tears were in Ellen's eyes as she spoke of the bright prospects which were at last opening upon her friend, after her long trial, whilst Louisa almost forgot that she was happy, as her thoughts involuntarily recurred to the time when she had offered Ellen the same congratulations, on her engagement to Edward Annesley. How changed was every thing since then! Both, however, forgot their previous subject of reflection, as Lord Caldwell's letter was brought in. Ellen turned pale as she recognised the handwriting, and it was with difficulty she could break the seal with her trembling fingers. When she had read it through, she leant back on her chair, and put her hand over her eyes.

"Ellen!" said Louisa, who had been anxiously watching her.

Ellen silently gave her the letter, and sank back into the same position.

"Selfish to the last!" exclaimed Louisa, with uncontrollable contempt, as she finished reading it. "Selfish in adversity as he was in prosperity!"

"Hush, Louisa! He is the father of my child."

"Forgive me, dearest; I did not mean to hurt you. But what answer will you give him?"

"Do not ask me now: I must have time." She took the letter from the table, and slowly left the room.

She did not appear again during the whole day ; and once, when Louisa gently entered her room to see if she required any thing, she found her kneeling in earnest prayer. Reginald dined at the cottage, so that it was not till late in the evening that the two friends were again alone together. Louisa had kissed Ellen's pale cheek, and was going to leave her for the night, when the latter called her back.

"Do not leave me yet," said she, gently ; "this is perhaps the last evening we shall spend together for a long while."

"Then you have decided !" exclaimed Louisa.

"Yes !" There was a pause. Neither of them seemed able to speak.

"But Ellen," said Louisa at length, "have you sufficiently considered the step you are about to take ? Are you sure you have strength to bear, to endure"

"You may well doubt my strength," replied Ellen, humbly, "but I shall go in a better strength than my own. As to consideration, it seems to me that my path is plain. He is my husband, and I bound myself to be his, in weal or woe, in sickness or in health. God knows, there is guilt enough on my soul already, for having forgotten this vow, and I am bound to remember it now, now that he is fallen, and ill, and lonely, and he has none other to stand by him !"

The tears gushed to Louisa's eyes as she listened. "I feel that you are right," she answered ; "but can you promise to comply with his condition ? *Can* you forget the past ?"

"Forget ! No ! but I can be silent. The past is not so bitter to look back to now," added she, in a

lower voice, and the colour mounting to her face; "I cannot suffer again as I have done. Now that I know that *he* never deceived me, that he was ever true and noble, as I had believed him to be, the bitterest sting is gone. And now I know too that the sorrow I brought upon him is over, and he is at peace, and he no longer believes that I deserted him for rank or gold. The thought of the past cannot madden me again now."

"Thank God!" said Louisa, who, though she had long perceived that Ellen's mind was working round into peace, was not sure how far the change had gone. "If you can, indeed, from your heart forgive what has past, all may yet be well."

"I have too much need to be forgiven, not gladly to forgive others," said Ellen, in a tone which went to Louisa's very soul. "And besides, I cannot but feel grateful to him. I know that it is no small self-sacrifice to recall to his home the wife on whose name rests an ineffaceable stain; and is he not giving me back my child? Oh, Louisa! I hope—I believe I should have acted the same if I had been childless; but now, for that alone I would serve him as a slave, to my dying hour; for that alone I would endure all, more than all I have ever endured, and think myself blessed, and feel that I was only rightly rewarded for having once deserted my child!"

Both were silent for a moment. Louisa's eyes were fixed on Ellen, and the tears were running down her cheeks. As Ellen looked up, and saw her emotion, she threw herself on her neck.

"Louisa!—dearest Louisa! Oh! it is hard to think of parting from you, even to go to her. If I could but tell you all I feel towards you! You

who have borne with me as a mother with her child—you who stood by me when all others cast me off—you, who from childhood have been my best, truest, kindest friend !”

Tears choked her utterance, and Louisa pressed her again and again to her bosom, and kissed her pale cheeks, and soothed her as she had so often done of late, weeping herself the while ; nor would she leave her till she had seen her lie down to rest, and had watched her till the sleep her exhausted strength made so needful stole over her senses, and wrapped her worn spirit in forgetfulness.

* * * * *

Two nights afterwards, at that hour, Ellen was kneeling beside her child's cradle, and her husband stood beside her.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“What need of clamorous bells, or ribands gay,
These humble nuptials to proclaim or grace?
Angels of Love, look down upon the place,
Shed on the chosen Vale a sunbright day!
Even for such omen would the bride display
No mirthful gladness:—serious is her face,
Modest her mien; and she whose thoughts keep pace
With gentleness, in that becoming way
Will thank you.”

WORDSWORTH.

“A soul, by force of sorrows high,
Uplifted to the purest sky
Of undisturbed humanity!”

Ibid.

We hope that among our readers there are few who believe that the human heart can love but once; and that that first love, if it be true, must be everlasting, and can never yield to a second; or Louisa Conway will now, we fear, forfeit their esteem. That life is blessed, indeed, whose first spring of love ripens into summer; upon whose path the same sun that shone on its outset still beams with constant splendour, gilding it to the end. Blessed, indeed! but such is the lot of few among the children of men.

Most have loved, and their early dream has faded away, and they are left to create new visions, or to mourn in silence over the first. For it is circumstances that often make us constant to our early impressions: no kind fate may reserve for us to meet another being possessing the power to awaken the deep sympathies of our souls; and thus man will plunge into the world's business and the world's pleasures, and never again turn his thoughts to softer feelings; and woman will devour her sorrow in si-

lence, and bear a long train of lonely and unloved years to the grave, whilst the vain hope of her youth still lingers in her fancy, and she wastes upon the relic of a dream the warm, pure feelings which happier circumstances would have taught her to bestow upon a living object. But this argues not the necessary eternity of first love. It is most natural, however, that in this point we should deceive ourselves, so chill and dreary is the aspect of the world, when we first look abroad upon it after the light of love is withdrawn, and we feel like the ignorant men of old, who fell prostrate on first beholding an eclipse, and deemed the great luminary extinguished for ever.

Louisa had felt thus—and even when the idol of her worship was utterly driven from the shrine, she honestly believed that none other could ever take its place; and still she often trembled lest she should have deceived herself and Reginald, lest she should too hastily have allowed him to hope she could ever return his warm affection. She watched herself narrowly, now fearing that she was most cold, when he was most impassioned; now feeling bitterly that she was unable to enter into his rapturous anticipations of happiness, and fearing to wound him with the sight of her depression. Former days also would recur, and with them the recollection of their continual excitement, of their intense joys and anxieties, the thousand variations of passion—and, as she contrasted to them her present feelings, she would almost weep to think that her sisterly affection for her early friend could never become such love as she had then known—that she never could adequately reward Reginald's ardent devotion.

But these gloomy thoughts were not abiding;

his presence would generally dispel them ; and, day by day, as she received fresh proofs of his devoted attachment, and learnt to know more intimately his noble character, his powerful intellect chastened and directed by his high moral qualities, she felt her own regard increase in warmth and tenderness, and, except in still occurring moments of over-anxious self-communion, she looked forward almost as hopefully as her lover to a future of happiness.

Immediately after Ellen's return to her husband, Louisa had taken up her old quarters at Mrs. Allen's, much to Reginald's satisfaction, for he had complained sorely of the distance whilst she was at Hampstead. Now, no day was so full of business but that he could snatch a few minutes to spend with her, and, if he found her at times in a desponding mood, if his fond inquiries were still occasionally met with doubts and misgivings, he seldom failed, before he left her, to infuse into her heart some of the sunny confidence of his own. He trusted so entirely, that she dared not distrust herself. Still he remained faithful to his promise of allowing her time, of not pressing her decision ; and it was not till he had every reason to hope that she would yield no reluctant consent, that he, at length, urged her to fulfil their engagement and crown his happiness.

" I have forborne long," he continued, after having urged his request with all the eloquence of passion, " but surely, now, the time for doubt is over. Tell me, my own beloved, that you no longer fear ; let me feel that it is truly *your* happiness that I plead for, as well as my own ; tell me that I have not deceived myself, that you do now love me ; let me hear the blessed assurance from your own lips, and I shall be happy !"

His impassioned glance was fixed on her countenance, watching its every change, as her colour came and went, and her lips quivered with agitation; and when, at length, she raised her eyes for an instant to his, and gently returned the pressure of his hand, he caught her in his arms and clasped her to his heart; and, at that moment, all disappointment and bitterness, all her former love and suffering, were effaced from the memory of both.

The day was fixed for their marriage, and Mrs. Allen, who warmly sympathized in her young friend's happiness, joyfully set about the necessary preparations. Louisa was anxious that the wedding should be as quiet as possible, and, as Lady Catherine St. John was abroad, and the Montagues had gone down to Oaklands as soon as the season was over, there were no obstacles to her wishes. Lord and Lady Caldwell were also out of town, and their absence saved Louisa the pain she would have felt, had Ellen been near her; and yet prevented, as, under the present circumstances, she must have been, from assisting at her friend's marriage. Louisa received a letter from her on the morning of the wedding, full of affectionate wishes and prayers for her happiness; but there was something in her letter which pleased her even more than these: she could read there many indications of a spirit more at peace with itself, a new and clearer view of life, a mind become more independent of the circumstances of its fate. Louisa had never before been so certain of Ellen's power to endure the future trials of the lot to which she had willingly returned, but now she felt she could rest in that assurance; for, out of Ellen's very weakness *had arisen strength*—a strength which few things *could crush*; and, in this confidence, she lost the

last painful feeling which had overclouded her own peace of mind.

No one, perhaps, had looked forward to this wedding day with such unalloyed pleasure as old Sarah. She had long silently anticipated this conclusion to the renewed intimacy between Mr. Talbot and her young mistress, and he himself scarcely waited more impatiently for the eventful morning.

"God bless you, my dear child," said she, after presiding over Louisa's simple bridal toilette and the tears stood in her eyes as she spoke. "God bless you! and I thank him, from my heart, that he has left me to see this day. Now I may close my eyes, and lie down in peace, whenever it shall please him to call me to my rest; my business in this world is over, and I am ready to die, now I can leave you with one better able to watch over and care for you than a poor old body like myself. It seems to me but yesterday," continued the faithful creature, while Louisa was too much moved to speak, "that I stood by your poor mother, dear, on *her* wedding morning, and saw them put the bride's wreath in her beautiful hair; and I wondered if it was possible that any man should be worthy of a creature so lovely and so good. But, indeed, him she had chosen did prove himself worthy, and I pray, dear, that Mr. Talbot may be such a husband to you as he was to her; and may God bless you both!"

This allusion to her lost parents finally overset the calmness Louisa had been labouring to maintain, and the tears she had tried to repress gushed forth abundantly. The thought of her father had been constantly present with her at this most important crisis of her life; and, as she treasured up every recollection of his affection for Reginald,

of his perfect confidence in him, the assurance that he would have approved their union, and rejoiced in her happiness, gave new joy to her heart. And though sorrowful thoughts would mingle with her joy, and she mourned that she could not now hear his blessing—that his hand was cold in the grave, whilst a stranger must bestow hers at the altar,—she turned from these again, to cling more fondly still to him who had sought her in her loneliness—who would make her forget her orphan state, and who, from the absence of all other ties, seemed more entirely to be all in all to her. Thus, smiling through her tears, she answered the old nurse's affectionate words with a warm embrace, and then prepared to accompany Mrs. Allen, who had come to summon her to church.

Her wish that the wedding should be quite private had been strictly attended to, and Mrs. Allen, Sarah, and a friend of Reginald's, who gave her away, were the only persons present. The ceremony was performed by Edward Annesley, whose warmest wishes accompanied the blessing he pronounced over their union. Tears came to Mrs. Allen's eyes, for, happy as her married life had been, marriage is to every woman almost awful in its solemnity, as they feel how entirely the words then spoken decide the fate of her who utters them, and a passing thought would occur, how she had once hoped to hear that same blessing pronounced over Edward and a bride younger and more beautiful than the one who stood before her,—who should have taken her place as the ministering spirit of his home, when she was called away to her rest.

But Louisa was firm and collected; she had cast all her fear behind her; and, if she advanced to the altar with less rapture than in the glow of her





